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Frank Dietz Back from the Garden: Urban Visions in Contemporary American Utopias

Our visions of a better society have traditionally been located between two extremes: the garden and the city. Pastoral visions of a simplified existence, such as William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, have exerted considerable attraction on readers living in a complex technological society. It is not surprising that we find a large number of pastoral utopias in American literature of the 1970s and 1980s, ranging from Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and *Ecotopia Emerging* which advocate a synthesis of nature and selected elements of modern technology, to more radical pastorals such as Dorothy Bryant's *The Kin of Ata are Waiting for You* or Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* that completely reject modern urban life in favor of a vision of pre-technological societies dominated by myth and magic. A number of these anti-technological utopias have received considerable critical attention, and this may have created the impression that urban utopias have become virtually extinct in American literature.

Yet a small group of recent utopias has envisioned complex technological societies, deliberately reclaiming urban space by subverting the conventions of dystopian fiction associated with the image of the city. These four American novels—Silverberg's *The World Inside*, Delany's *Tristram*, Niven and Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty*, and Pohl's *The Years of the City*—react to the conventional association of urban space with dystopian nightmares and envision utopias which once more associate the city with the good life.

Utopia and the city have been closely allied since the beginnings of this genre. The tradition includes Plato's imagined city-state as well as many utopias whose titles already advertise their urban nature, for instance Campanella's *City of the Sun* or Illing's *Utopolis*. The reason for this affinity between the city and utopian literature lies in the very concept of the city as a space separate from the world of nature which is seen as shapeless and chaotic. The great urban historian Lewis Mumford has pointed out that "the concept of utopia is not a Hellenistic speculative fantasy, but a derivation from an historic event: that indeed the first utopia was the city itself" (3).

Cities in utopian literature often symbolize the rational structure of the state by their geometric simplicity. This sign of a rationally ordered space allows the utopian traveler to perceive the equally rational social order. It is for this very reason that urban utopias, from Andreas's *Christianopolis* to Jönger's *Helepolis* often contain maps. Furthermore, many utopian travelers are able to "read" the spatial structure of utopian communities, as in the case of the protagonist of James Keilly's "The People of Prashad":

If the city itself has no punctuation, the surrounding nature, culminating in snow-covered peaks at the horizon, has that to spare, and in that respect, the city seems to defer to the magnificence of its surroundings; it doesn't contend. Palad Agormas, like all cities, reflects the values and ideal of the people who built it and live in it. . . . the whole story was there at first

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Charles Platt finds that *The Kindness of Women*
is hardly as comforting as its title
John Clute says ignore the cover art:
read *He, She and It*
Leonard Rysdyk on Heinlein: *The Next Generation*
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The Left Hand of Darkness
Bryan Chofin's cheesecake rises to the occasion
*Plus horror bloopers, neglected novels, remade histories,
Kellogg's acting flakes, and more Canadian sf*

Charles Platt A Review of *The Kindness of Women* by J.G. Ballard

New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux 1991;
\$19.95 hc; 343 pages

A more accurate title for this book might be "The Cruelty of Mankind." It is a compelling, sometimes overwhelming study of inhuman acts in the late twentieth century, from which a woman's embrace offers respite that is transient at best. The material is so relentlessly disturbing, a reviewer in *The New York Times* took it upon himself to write a patronizing lament for Ballard's sanity. This, of course, was merely a tribute to the author's art. If Ballard were as deranged as his fictionalized confessional suggests, he would never have been able to write it with such eloquent, exquisite precision.

Ballard spent much of his childhood in wartime Shanghai, where he was imprisoned by Japanese occupying forces. He used these experiences explicitly in his novel *Empire of the Sun* and implicitly in earlier surreal work such as *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, in which apocalyptic disaster was a recurring theme. These earlier books established his reputation as a writer of exceptional power and vision, but their arid landscapes, populated by enigmatic figures searching for fulfillment through oblivion, never achieved truly widespread recognition. Thus, *Empire of the Sun* was a breakthrough book, and Ballard must have wanted to follow it with something that would sustain at least some of his new popularity. To his credit, he has managed to write a sequel that transcends its predecessor and is in many ways a more important work.

The Kindness of Women takes us back again to Shanghai at the outbreak of war. This time the narrative is in the first person, tempting us (deceptively) to accept it as straight autobiography. In the rest of this review I will try to distinguish between actual events which Ballard experienced, and partially fictitious events in the book which Ballard describes through the device of his first-person narrator.

In an unassuming, economical, but brilliantly evocative style, he reintroduces Shanghai as a city where poverty and squalor collide with

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wealth and decadence on a grandiose scale. This is a place where sanitation trucks routinely collect the corpses of beggars who die of typhus, while wealthy American businessmen hang out in night clubs with Chinese gangsters and street vendors sell cups of steaming blood drawn from the necks of live geese.

To the seven-year-old narrator, this surreal maelstrom is a commonplace. He looks forward to the outbreak of war as just another entertaining spectacle. Soon, however, the bombs are falling on Shanghai, blood is gushing not from the necks of geese but from amputated limbs amid dusty wreckage, and Ballard describes his young self exiled to a prison camp.

After a brief chapter in the camp, the narrative jumps ahead several years to the surrender of the Japanese and the end of hostilities. The young narrator wanders alone along a railroad track, through fields abandoned by retreating forces. Here, he encounters four Japanese soldiers in a railroad station, slowly and methodically strangling a Chinese man by binding him to a wooden post with telephone wire.

Elsewhere in the book we witness events of large-scale slaughter, such as the mass-murder of Japanese prisoners under the jurisdiction of American forces on a mud-flat outside Shanghai. But the death of the Chinese man at the railroad station is a singular event that resonates more powerfully than all the other episodes of cruelty and death. Ballard's narrator is not merely fascinated by it, but drawn to it. This slow murder is the closest he comes to experiencing death himself. Possibly, he feels he should have been the one to be killed. The Japanese soldiers are agents of death, yet their power is seductive, almost sexual. This quixotic, mystical capacity to destroy continues to haunt the narrator through the rest of the novel.

After Shanghai, we move to Cambridge, England, where Ballard studied medicine. He describes himself "marooned in a small, grey country where the sun rarely rose above the rooftops. . . . The English talked as if they had won the war, but behaved as if they had lost it." By comparison, American servicemen at nearby air bases seem glamorous and charismatic as they survey the landscape "with the confident eyes of an occupying power." Their aircraft are loaded with nuclear weapons,

which the narrator views with fetishistic yearning. He owes his life to the atomic bomb, since it ended the war and freed him from the prison camp where food supplies were virtually exhausted. Thus, his values are inverted. The bomb has a seductive aura; armageddon is a form of apocalyptic fulfillment; and he speaks of atomic weapons as "a powerful increment to the psychotic imagination, sanctioning everything."

Meanwhile, at the university, his medical training requires him to dissect a female human cadaver. Over a period of weeks, he experiences a growing sense of intimacy with the corpse. In one sense, he is recapitulating his childhood among war casualties, and exorcising it. At the same time, he is literally courting death. His girlfriend at the time half-jokingly refers to the cadaver as her rival.

When the dissection is complete, the body has been reduced to its component parts, and effectively ceases to exist as a person. The narrator feels liberated; and yet, for him and a childhood friend named (in the novel) David Hunter, "the war years in Shanghai still set the hidden agendas of our lives." The two of them enlist in the air force, searching for the sense of power and purpose that played such a role in their past.

Ballard spent some time stationed on a base in Saskatchewan, and he describes the experience of flying with impeccable, vivid realism. In *The Kindness of Women*, however, his training sorties serve a higher symbolic purpose, as practice runs for World War III. His narrator imagines actually delivering a nuclear bomb, ushering in the new era of total destruction.

David Hunter stays in the air force while Ballard's narrator quits and returns to England. Hunter seems to serve as a kind of alter-ego through the rest of the book (like Vaughn in Ballard's *Crawl*), literalizing some of the dark fantasies that the narrator turns away from as he moves to a suburban life in Shepperton, Middlesex (where Ballard has continued to live since that time).

We move, now, into the 1960s. The narrator has married and finds himself surprisingly happy, comforted by domesticity. And yet, his wife dies (as Ballard's wife did die) while they are on a vacation in Spain. The chapters describing her death are as carefully measured as those describing atrocities in Shanghai, and are as painfully honest. To narrate such a

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[Michael Swenwick's "Nine Short Fiction Reviews" will be concluded next issue.]

personal loss in such detail is an exceptional achievement, suggesting almost masochistic bravery on the part of the writer.

Following the death of his wife, Ballard chose to raise his three young children as a single father. He refers to this in *The Kindness of Women* but spends more time describing himself plunging into the decadence of the late 1960s, where "the death of affect presided like a morbid sun over the playground of that ominous decade." His narrator experiments with drugs and perversion; he visits an open-air rock concert where teenagers in sleeping bags remind him of Chinese peasants in drainage ditches; and he becomes obsessed with car crashes as a singular metaphor for the intersection of violence, eroticism, and consumer imagery in the evolving media landscape.

Ballard organized an exhibition of crashed cars at a London art gallery, and he incorporates this in his novel, at the same time that he describes the return of David Hunter as a roving hit-and-run driver, a nemesis who ultimately ends up in a mental hospital after ramming a vehicle carrying two Japanese flight attendants. The novel also includes a fictionalized version of the car crash that Ballard experienced himself shortly after he completed writing *Crash*.

From here, *The Kindness of Women* moves into the 1970s and the 1980s; and as in real life, the pace slackens. The narrator collaborates with a pop-science media star who tries to make a TV documentary portraying his own slow death from cancer; and ultimately, he visits the movie set of his own book, *Empire of the Sun*. Thus we have a novel in a novel, and the narrator walks through a reconstruction of his own childhood—a cinematic version of reality that feels more real than the memories he has been attempting to exorcise. From here we move to an ending that is (unusually, in a Ballard novel) conventionally upbeat.

Overall, one can see *The Kindness of Women* as a quest for meaning. The protagonist journeys through a codified landscape furnished with events and symbols that serve as signposts—or perhaps as placards providing commentary beside exhibits in an atrocity exhibition. This self-conscious, ritualistic codification of an odyssey is characteristic of almost all Ballard's novels. Its purpose is not to simplify, but to clarify, much as a therapist might guide a patient recapitulating a dream, drawing parallels and examining the symbolism.

At the same time, this book is more wide-rangingly, conventionally autobiographical than anything else Ballard has written. It is thus an interesting hybrid form, drawing on the power of surrealism as the same time that its realism enables Ballard to be explicit in his commentary on social trends in the Western world.

Having known Ballard myself in the late 1960s, when he was a regular contributor to *New Worlds* magazine and I served as a member

of its staff, I find myself recognizing some of the figures in this novel. The pop-science media star is loosely based on Dr. Christopher Evans, who once contributed to *New Worlds* magazine, died of cancer in the 1970s, and incidentally served as the model for Vaughn in *Crash*. Sally Mumford, who appears in *The Kindness of Women* as a wonderfully decadent maven of the late-sixties London art scene, seems like a highly exaggerated version of Emma Tennant, the one-time editor/publisher of *Bananas*, a literary magazine to which Ballard contributed. And so on.

However, Ballard obviously didn't intend to write a straight autobiography, or even a *roman à clef*. Instead, like any good novelist, he used the events and the people in his life as a starting point—or, to put it more bluntly, as source material. The reader should remember that this book, like *Empire of the Sun*, is not mere reportage. It is a highly developed novel.

Ballard's motives seem clear: not just to evoke his own past, but to illuminate our future. He suggests that pre-war Shanghai was a city ahead of its time, where violence, poverty, wealth, perversion, death, and glamor coexisted like threads in some modern soap opera. The lure of violence and destruction, which he experienced as a child surrounded by unspeakable images of war, is now merchandized worldwide in a mosaic of movie images, rock videos, and news clips. Depersonalized eroticism flourishes in pornography. And even now, the transcendent possibility of nuclear war still lingers over us as the ultimate fulfillment of any death-wish.

Ballard has written on these themes many times before, but never so clearly, so convincingly, or so graphically as in *The Kindness of Women*. Its sexual descriptions alone are a stunning exercise in graphic honesty, adding a fascinatingly clinical quality to erotica.

Less obviously, there is a lot of love here, which may be one reason why Ballard chose this title. I don't believe that anyone can write so meticulously and knowingly about decadence and death without also caring deeply for the human values which struggle into view at intervals throughout the book. Ballard's obsessive involvement with horror and decadence has been widely misinterpreted as symptomatic of a sick mind. Personally, I see him bravely confronting the biggest themes and the most frightening truths in himself and in the world at large.

In *The Kindness of Women*, a character complains that Ballard's narrator has a lurid imagination. In response, the narrator remarks, "the world lurid." Ballard is our greatest guide to this lurid landscape, and *The Kindness of Women* is his most revelatory report from the frontiers.

Charles Platt's most recent novel is *The Silicon Man*.

Orbital Resonance by John Barnes

New York: Tor, 1991; \$17.95 hc; 214 pages

reviewed by Leonard Rysdyk

Like JFK and Elvis, Robert Heinlein is alive and well and living among us under the name of John Barnes. He has mellowed, too—extreme old age will do that—so it is a gentler Robert Heinlein—I mean JOHN BARNES (wink, wink)—who comes before us with a new novel, *Orbital Resonance*.

It is awfully good. Gone are the arrogant pronouncements and know-it-all characters, gone the cheap sexual jolts and general long-windedness of his latter years. *Orbital Resonance* reminds us of Heinlein's more thoughtful YA books. Like *Podkayne of Mars*, *Orbital Resonance* is told from the viewpoint of a precocious adolescent. The young woman, Melpomene Murray, has been assigned to explain life on the asteroid to Earth children for Scholastic Press, so info dumps are part of the style. One must suppose they are a necessary evil because there is a lot going on, more even than in those wonderful books of the late forties, fifties and early sixties, for family conflicts, scientific speculation and the fate of the Earth are all on the queue.

Like many of Heinlein's books, especially those before *Stranger In A Strange Land*, *Orbital Resonance* often stops for a while to describe some aspect of the world in which it takes place, in this case a domesticated asteroid in a continuously modulated orbit which swings it close to Earth and Mars. In the Heinlein tradition, the book tickles the interest of hard sci fans by playing with scientific and

technological speculations. While the speculations in *Orbital Resonance* are as interesting in themselves as those in Heinlein's earlier books, they do slow down the story. For example, various low-g sports are described at length; later one of them figures prominently in the plot, but they do not seem as rewarding as the other events in the novel from which they somewhat detract.

In fact, the book seems quite desultory until about halfway through. It offers up a nice but not especially compelling story about the new kid on the block, who is an Earthboy and a bully, and the budding sexuality of the thirteen year-old protagonist. After about page one hundred, though, this innocuous reminder of *Podkayne* becomes more like *The Moon Is a Hard Mistress*. We find—as they do—that the young people on the asteroid are receiving more than a merely innovative and rigorous education; they actually are being conditioned to certain responses in a society modeled on B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. The problem is the conditioning is out of control. The adults have not been able to supervise their children's minds or environments—especially the social environment of the children's own society of schoolmates—completely enough for their plan to work. Chaos—or at least unruliness and rebelliousness—has broken out among the young people. They are experiencing and creating a life that is more complicated than their conditioning allows for, yet they are caught in a web of predetermined

responses, which are not appropriate or sufficient. Melpomene, our narrator, luckily belongs to a special group among the young people who have been brought up with more random factors in their lives so they will not be merely happy cattle but willing and eager to take on leadership positions.

The climax comes during a team sport. Finally, our attentiveness to the descriptions of low-g sports is repaid when the bully attempts to subvert one of the games. Suddenly, Melpomene must take a leadership role. This is an exciting, but not the climactic, moment, for by this time we know she has been prepared to lead. The drama comes from the other kids having to make individual decisions to go against their training. When the game of acrocross, carefully designed to foster team play and interdependence, becomes a brawl with the students who have been conditioned to pacifism ganging up on the bully—whom the adults had never planned for in the first place—a crisis point is reached for the whole community. The adults decide that they do not know what is best for their progeny after all, that they do not know how to run the colony. They give up, turn the community over to the kids and move to Mars.

As much like Heinlein's books as *Orbital Resonance* is in terms of plot, style and mood, anyone even vaguely familiar with the "Heinlein-craze" work can see there has been a one hundred and eighty degree turn in values and politics. Heinlein was the champion of individuality and the notion that the true and just course—the RIGHT course—is available to anyone with the common sense to see it. Barnes sees a world where neither two-fisted, American-style individualism or prayer-handed, Japanese-style consensualism is an answer. Indeed, he sees a world in which there are no answers and intelligent, thoughtful people cannot find solutions to problems any more than "right-thinking" ones.

To emphasize this point, Barnes even includes a character-type from his incarnation as Robert Heinlein. It is the father of Melpomene's boyfriend. A vacuum extruder, he works with his hands out in space and belongs to a union. Though the characters inhabit an ostensibly classless society, there is some friction between laborers and management people. The union man very fairly explains why there must be a union to look out for the long-term interests of the company from the production standpoint and he makes a solid case for the common sense approach to life. But he is more notable to Melpomene for the fact that when he is angry he hits his son. Heinlein would have reminded us of some conventional wisdom, to "spare the rod and spoil the child," but Melpomene is shocked and the father is humiliated and is in counseling to remedy his problem. Thus, Barnes allows everyone room to be wrong; the planners in their hubris and the regular-joes in their tempers. He has grown wiser as well as mellower than when he was Robert Heinlein; the world he creates now is more complex than in his earlier works.

What is most strikingly different between Barnes's current work and that of his earlier self is found in the quality of personal relationships among the characters. While Heinlein always had discernible characters, their interactions were rarely more complicated than a hero fighting a malefactor and a know-it-all explaining things to everyone else. Women generally gave saucy answers to show they were a match for the smarty-pants male lead but then they settled comfortably—but saucily—into their roles as sex objects, mothers and support personnel. Not so here. The men and women of *Orbital Resonance* are often flawed, and sometimes surprising, but never figures from central casting. Melpomene's mother, for example, is far more affecting than any character from Heinlein, except perhaps the sentient computer Mike from *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. When the book begins, she has already quit her job and sunk into a semi-invalid existence, a world of the imagination fed by sentimental novels of small town life on Earth. Melpomene is embarrassed and angry at her mother's "uncool" behavior and that she won't pull her weight in the community of the ship. (The tension here is accentuated when we find out this is the conflict between the young woman's conditioned response to anti-social behavior and her natural love for her mother.) Melpomene's father does not have the solution to his family's problem either. Heinlein would have offered a Father-Knows-Best-type whose gentle wisdom would soon put everything and everyone back in their places, the children falling happily into line behind the mother. Not here. There is discord between husband

Read This

Recently read and recommended by *Charles de Lint*:

Animal Dreams by Barbara Kingsolver (HarperCollins, 1990) for Kingsolver's gift with language, but also for her metaphorical use of myth and folklore without ever needing to bring the elements directly on stage as a genre writer might have been tempted to do.

Clown House by Megan Lindholm (Bantam Spectra, 1991) for much the same reason as the Kingsolver book except while Lindholm does bring the mythic matter directly on stage, it's done in such a refreshing and judicious manner that one can't help but be enchanted. Both novels don't shy away from unpleasant realities of the real world, but neither author wallows in angst either.

Flying in Face by Susan Palwick (Tor, 1992) is literally one of the best books I've read in a very long time. It's a novel dealing with child abuse with the details of the abuse handled off-stage. Surprisingly, this makes the narrative—mostly from a twelve-year-old's POV—all the more moving. Powerful, lyric and infused with genuine heart. For a more hard-hitting, in-your-face take on the same subject, try anything by Andrew Vachas.

A Serious Widow by Constance Beresford-Howe (Macmillan, 1991). Forget Margaret Atwood; this is Canada's number one woman of letters. Her books are serious, funny, evocative and deal with real people in realistic situations made larger than life through the author's considerable gift for language and attention to just the right detail. Her best novel is *The Book of Eve*, her most literate is *Prospero's Daughter*, but anything she writes is terrific and this novel's as good a place as any to give her a try.

And the Angels Sing by Kate Wilhelm (St. Martin's, 1992) is a perfect blend of Wilhelm's mainstream and genre short stories, proving that neither is better than the other, just different. If you need to know why anyone recommends a Wilhelm book, you're in the wrong business. Fiction doesn't get much better than this.

Sandman: Dream Country by Neil Gaiman and various artists (DC Comics, 1991). Sure, it's a comic book, but it's also one of the best examples of contemporary fantasy being published today. These are literate, myth-driven stories that just happen to be accompanied by pictures. *Dream Country* is a terrific introduction to Gaiman's work and includes both his award-winning collaboration with Charles Vess as well as his complete script for one of the stories from which you can glean that it takes Gaiman twice the work it does a prose writer to write a short story, rather than half the work as many might suppose.

and wife and scenes of the children huddling together for mutual support. In short, there is real family life, real emotion and it is very affecting.

Barnes has learned a lot from his years as Robert Heinlein and he has learned well. Heinlein's books were rarely empty activities set in an sf milieu—like E. E. "Doc" Smith's work, to take an extreme example—nor were they compilations of speculations wrapped in a sugar coating of plot, which was sometimes the case with the other "deans" of the sf world, Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov. At his best, Heinlein's books were conflicts of ideas, usually of anarchic (but responsible, charitable and commonsensical) individualism against any kind of structured (hypocritical, self-serving) authority. John Barnes

has kept the titillation of technology that we hard sf fans love and the strong plot that makes his work real adventure. More importantly, he has kept the challenging intellectual framework that drives the emotions and actions of the book. Though, in this book at least, he has somewhat downplayed the plot, he has turned up the power on the intellectual challenge. The ideas and values in conflict in *Orbital Resonance* are generally more challenging and complicated than even those in *Stranger in a Strange Land*. There is less shock and adventure here than in the Heinlein books, fewer cheap tricks. There is more thought and more genuine feeling.

He, She and It by Marge Piercy

New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991; \$22.00; 446 pages

reviewed by John Clute

No reader who found Marge Piercy's eleven novel and third sf text a hard book to open could ever be censured by a just world. *He, She and It*, at first glance, an almost supernaturally unwinning object to land upon a desk. Knopf's cover art—so different from the exquisite work that came from this firm only a few years ago—is meretriciously, mercilessly reborative, the kind of cover art which hints to the reader that the tale it illustrates is a bomb stillborn and deeply resented by the editor who has just now been brought on board to replace the previous editor who managed to jump ship just before his/her chicken came home to roost. In the lower left an excruciatingly executed Chagall-esque woman—despite the clear provenance, she is lamely cardboard—stares away from us towards two bland arches executed in a School-of-De-Chirico's-Deathbed style wall interpenetrated by dim twee stars and a crescent moon. The shadow of a numb humanoid figure is visible inside each arch. In the distance, through the left-hand arch, can be seen a small Eastern European town from a long time ago; through the right-hand arch can be seen a "modernistic" scape which closely resembles any small American city-centre of the 1980s. Holed by arch-top symbolism—by a combination of "meaningful" images which adds up to a total image which implacably means *nothing at all*—the heart sinks.

For those not sensitive to bad art, the unwelcome of the book will have to be conveyed through its seriously—almost dementedly—deficient title, which manages to imply to potential readers that the novel it fronts is one of those nudging, 400 page, leaden-headed pig-proclamations uttered by writers after the inspiration of their earlier years has flagged but Ph.D. theses have been written about them which they can't stop reading though they know they must stop now and every night they dream paraphrases of the songs they sang in their heart and every morning transcribe greily, greily their dreams, and delivers this dreadful warning through a cluster of awful English monosyllables nearly impossible to recollect in the proper order, and therefore impossible to ask for in the shop. If you were so dumb to want to. In the mind's eye of this reviewer, it is a title which always turns to *She-He-It*.

But we do, some of us, eventually, open the book. And we were not dumb to. For we find that *He, She and It* does not, after all deserve the obsequies it comes cloaked in. Very soon, it comes clear that Marge Piercy has done her homework on current sf versions of the future, and has settled her tale into a comfortable recension of that future. Several hundred pages in, the AI-controlled data-net, which dominates the 21st century corporate world she depicts, is even referred to as cyberspace, and a note at the end of the text acknowledges William Gibson; if this seems a routine precaution and courtesy on the part of a mainline author, take a look at the egregious Paul Theroux's slammer's guide *O-Zone* (1985), whose pig-ignorance of other versions of the thin world it boastfully claims to have created is far more typical of the sort of book non-sf writers create when they think to "redeem" it by stopping for the night in a clean motel near the airport while making sure they don't drink the water. Though it starts slow, and starts more than once, and though it closes in a sentimental dying fall which contradicts most of what the author clearly knows about 1991's versions of the nature of next century's AIs in the Net, the body of the book is alert, engaged, contemporary, proactive in the shits

Despite similarities, one might say that John Barnes is a completely different writer—no, an entirely different *person*!—from Robert Heinlein, that he is more an attentive student than a successor and an important voice in his own right.

Luckily, we know better. Indeed, "Barnes's" (wink, wink, nudge, nudge) success is so great that one can await with growing impatience not only his next book, but Elvis' new record (rumored to be in final mixing) and the re-ascendency of our once and future president. ▶

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of genre. I should have come with a real title: those of Piercy's first two sf novels, *Dance the Eagle to Sleep* (1970) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), are clear proof that she knows what a title is—and it should have been presented like a real book. Because it is one.

After decades of war and plague and nearly terminal pollution of the Mother, the 21st century world has settled into uneasy quiescence. Governments no longer exist. A couple of dozen multi-national corporations, dominated by the Japanese and the Germans, operate through dour arcologies protected against the unshielded sun and the other depredations of an Earth no longer properly habitable by the humans who have inherited our blighting. Non-corporation people live in Gibsonian megalopolises with names like The Glop (at times, it is difficult to sort out whether or not Piercy thinks the world is overcrowded or not; her urban imagery derives from novels which assume the world to be choked with humanity, but her story assumes a depopulated Earth), and a few free cities occupy the periphery, surviving through the sale of special skills. The main protagonist of the book, after losing her son in a custody case to a corporation apparatchik, returns to the Jewish free town of Tikva, which is in New England, and where she was born and raised by her grandmother, families being matrilineal—a characteristic of Jewish life in this novel which, one suspects, has more to do with Piercy's approval of the Jews of Tikva than any sustained presentation of a point of view which even the novel at hand, by spending dozens of pages in patriarchal Prague, deprecates. Here in Tikva she finds that the genius father of the man she had been madly in love with when they were both adolescents has secretly created a cyborg with the aid of her grandmother, who is also a genius, and that this cyborg has both self-awareness and a risible penis. Alternating chapters told by her grandmother to this cyborg as part of his training in humanity tell the story of Rabbi Loew's creation of a golem in the Prague of 1600.

It is a tale which, as we know, and as the grandmother must also know, ends in tears, ends in the death of the golem. So we are warned. Shira, the protagonist, soon becomes sexually involved with Yod the penisless cyborg, and the plot begins to thicken, quite satisfactorily. Her old "multi" is after Yod. Shira's revolutionary mother returns to Tikva. Shira's old lover, the flamboyant but significantly unsexier Gadi, also shows up. The multi tries to invade Tikva through the Net, but is repulsed by Yod, who is trained to inhabit cyberspace, which he knows like the back of his hand. It is all of it familiar to sf readers, but refreshingly retold. The end (as we were informed at the very beginning) is tears; after fighting unsuccessfully to be recognized as a legal person, Yod is ordered to deliver himself to the multi and to commit suicide by blowing up the bosses, and obeys. But in dealing out this doom, Piercy astonishingly mixes Gibson's—and everyone else's—standard cyberspace transcendence routine, seeming not even to be aware that any sf novel written after 1984 would either have Yod download his electronic essence into the density of the Net at the last moment, and so survive; or tell us why in the world not. In doing neither, Piercy reveals a touristic ignorance of local mores, but for the first time, and in any case the essence of *He, She and It* lies elsewhere.

As usual in a Piercy novel, the ostensible heart of the enterprise is a bawling narrative analysis of the nature of the relations between men and women, though (as usual) her telling of the tale defaults in the awful knowingness of melodrama, for she has a terrible and destructive habit

of knowing who's right and who's wrong in her tales. The real heart of the Piercy enterprise lies—quite astonishingly, given the noise of her writing—in the interior monologues of her characters, who seem far more human when they're not dancing out an imposed exemplary plot routine. Small gems of insight infiltrate *He, She, and It* throughout, like spies in a fun house; none of the major protagonists turns out (in contrast to the old Piercy model) to have been a monster of sexism all

his life though even his wife didn't guess, sort of thing; the parts of the tale set in Prague are warmly and eloquently achieved (though the analogy of golem and cyborg/AI is ultimately unfulfilling); and the flensed world of 2050 is ours soonest. ▶

John Clute reviews regularly for Interzone.

The Bakery Men Don't See by divers hands

Madison, WI: SF3, 1991; \$10.00 wrappers; 90 pages

reviewed by Bryan G. Choffin

I first heard about this project at Disclave, where some local fans were having a bake sale to raise money for the book's production. They were distributing informational flyers describing the establishment of a new award for in honor of James Tiptree, Jr., and also describing the assembling of this cookbook. But more importantly at that particular moment, they were also selling this cheesecake. See? An incredibly rich, dense, moist (but not too moist), marble cheesecake that in and of itself brought redemption to an otherwise rather uneventful convention. It was organically yummy. Absolutely perfect firmness and creamy texture. If I remember correctly, it was also lunch.

I went away with my slice of cheesecake and a flyer, and did not think too much of it after the con, though this was not the sort of cheesecake one quickly forgets. I filed it away in the back of my mind until Philcon, where the finished cookbook was being sold from a table. The fellow who had made that cheesecake was behind the table, and the recipe for it was in the book.

Now I knew I had to have it.

The cookbook itself is a selection of recipes contributed by various writers and fans, and each contribution is accompanied by a brief story about a woman important in the contributor's life, or about the contributor. The stories range from the serious to the humorous, and all are interesting reading. It is well designed in a style I would call Late Orthodox Macintosh, and conveniently comb bound to lay flat when in use. WARNING: This cookbook is Dietarily Incorrect, and the recipes for brownies, cakes, cookies, cheesecakes, mousses, etc., far outweigh anything your mother might approve of. Or, at least, anything my mother might approve of (of course, many of these recipes originated with mothers, and my mom's no slouch in the dessert-baking department either, so go figure).

Now, cookbooks are the original interactive media, so to truly put this book to the test, I couldn't get away with just reading it, I had to attempt to make something from it. The choice was obvious, though I was briefly tempted by the recipe for double-chocolate cheesecake. Fortunately, a good excuse for baking was coming up—some friends were having a big party for the winter solstice. It's a good idea when embarking on baking binges to have folks around to share with, so that everyone will become equally chubby.

I followed directions as exactly as possible, and did not give in to the temptation to use "light" cream cheese instead of the real stuff. Eggs, sugar, all those goodies. It still amazes me that people were able to make cheesecakes before the invention of electric mixers. Mine is a 30-year-old Hamilton Beach that was a wedding gift to my mother, all gleaming chrome and aerodynamic curves. Weighs a ton. I can't look at it without feeling a little like I'm eight years old again waiting for mom to finish mixing whatever she's making so I could scrape out the bowl with a rubber spatula (I was very thorough).

Amazingly, everything worked, or nearly enough. The recipe says the cheesecake rises to 4", though it did not, which was good, since that would have overflowed the pan. It rose just to the top of the pan, perfect cheesecake height. The directions recommend baking for 50 minutes or so and then letting it cool overnight to prevent cracking, but I ended up with a single huge fault line down the middle of the cake. It was also a little bit undercooked in the middle. So it's probably safer to use the traditional 55-60 minutes and pop it straight into the fridge when done (however, there is the suspicion that my oven no longer has accurate temperature controls). But the cake was still quite yummy and, when served at the party, didn't last long.

I haven't had time yet to test the other recipes in the book, but

judging by this and samples I've had at other convention bake sales, this book is loaded with a variety of delicious treats and there's probably something in it to suit everyone.

There is, of course, more to this book than just sugar and cholesterol. The money from the sale of this book (and various convention bake sales) will be used to fund a new award in honor of James Tiptree, Jr./Alice Sheldon. One's first reaction to such an announcement these days is always, "Oy, not another one," but I do hope they are well. If the awards were not already cluttered with awards, then an award to honor Tiptree would certainly be easily justified, at least as much as one to honor Dick or Sturgeon. The award has as its stated goals the recognition of work which uses gender issues in innovative and thought-provoking ways, but not necessarily to promote any ideological or moral agenda. Whether or not it's worthwhile to have such an award remains to be seen; it sounds all right in a speech, but the proof is in the awarding. So I would suggest we just wait and see what comes from Madison in March (probably over by the time this sees print). The true value of any award will assert itself over time, as evidenced by the state of sf's older "major" awards, whose little statuettes probably should no longer be made out of wood and metal, but out of, well, you know, it's pink . . . and it's packed in slime . . .

The book includes two introductory essays explaining the history of the project and the rationale behind it, as well as reprinting the speeches by Pat Murphy and Pamela Sargent from last year's WisCon which started the ball rolling. The speeches are clear and unequivocal: the attitudes of many publishers, reviewers and readers towards if written by women leaves much to be desired. I won't indulge in a boring socio-political deconstructionist analysis of the situation when, for a measly ten bucks, you could just read their much more entertaining and insightful treatment of the topic. And get a really great cheesecake recipe, to boot. ▶

Bryan G. Choffin is the publisher of Broken Mirrors Press.

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"All You Movers—"

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of address card, lest we lose you forever.

Back from the Garden

continued from page 1

right. What I was being told was, among other things, that the people of Prashad have no institutionalized government or religion. . . . (54; italics mine)

This motif of the utopian city as text also appears in the four novels under discussion here. The rigidly structured, introverted society in Silverberg's *The World Inside*, for instance, lives in huge "urban monads" that rise hundreds of stories into the air. Appropriately, the inhabitants of the lower floors are also inferior in social status. Frederik Pohl, on the other hand, emphasizes the more egalitarian aspects of his utopian society by trimming the tops of skyscrapers when they interfere with the protective dome built over Manhattan. Samuel Delany's pessimistic society, which seems to lack any established hierarchy, is presented as a maze of streets and public squares where people can freely act out and explore their social roles. Niven and Pournelle's *Quest of Reality*, finally, locates a neo-fundamentalist utopia in a gigantic fortresslike building that towers over the rest of L.A. Not surprisingly, much of the novel's plot revolves around the themes of intrusion and escape.

In the course of the twentieth century, however, dystopian literature has often turned the imagery of utopian rationality into visions of total control. In *Zamiatin's We*, Foster's "The Machine Stops," Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* the glass-and-steel architecture of nineteenth-century technological utopianism have become symbols of oppression. Accordingly, the protagonists of these texts are all yearning for a "green world," a timeless pastoral space from which they either come (Huxley's savage), or to which they flee or dream of fleeing (the protagonists of *We*, "The Machine Stops," *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *Fahrenheit 451*). After the flight of the dystopian rebel, the authors of these books often indulge in apocalyptic fantasies which leave the world and the text cleansed from the evil of the city and ready to return to a more natural way of life. The idea behind these plots is, of course, anything but new and is actually merely a transformation of the pastoral tradition. However, the idealization of the countryside over the degenerate city has been taken to almost ludicrous extremes in some recent utopias such as Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground*, where a miraculous revolt of "mother nature" not only robs men of their sexual potency, but also interferes with the working of any machine outside the narrow confines of a city. Such pastoral utopias offend against one of the basic principles of utopian writing: that the utopian vision should balance social satire, creative imagination, and a minimum of credibility. A return to the garden which simply does away with all the problems of an advanced urban civilization thus denies the critical potential of literary utopias by indulging in an escapist fantasy.

How did the four texts discussed here challenge the negative connotations that urban space has had in recent utopian fiction? To answer this we have to discuss three aspects in which these novels differ from traditional technological utopianism:

- First, the shift in narrative emphasis from the description of the social system and technological hardware common in nineteenth-century technological utopianism towards the characters who now have become much more than social types.

- Secondly, a dynamic conception of a utopian society which rejects both spatial and social closure.

- And finally, a parody of stereotypical dystopian plot conventions, such as the heroic rebellion or the protagonist's flight into nature.

These texts largely dispense with the stock figure of the utopian traveler and instead present the utopian society from an inside perspective. The utopian traveler has traditionally been a rudimentary character. Readers of classical literary utopias are more likely to remember place names rather than the names of the narrator, with the possible exception of More's Raphael Hythlodai. The narrators of Campanella's *Civitas Solis*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, or Andrea's *Christianopolis* (texts which in this utopian fashion are named after places, or rather non-places) are, appropriately enough, nameless.

Yet the function of utopian travelers is a crucial one, as they represent a textual image of an ideal or implied reader. The traveler is a reader in the text who serves as an intended model for the reader of the text. Utopian travelers are characters whose main goal it is to

interpret a place and a social system which only exist on the level of language. This interpretive activity is relatively uncomplicated in early literary utopias, as long as the "text" of the imagined society is logical and unambiguous. In the four urban utopias considered here, however, this simplistic viewpoint is replaced by an often ironic interplay of narrative perspectives which undermine the unity of the utopian text and introduce an element of ambiguity.

Quest of Reality by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle follows the traditional pattern most closely. This novel uses Sir George Reddy, a Canadian politician, as the stereotypically naive utopian traveler who is shown around Todos Santos, the huge ecology towering over Los Angeles. Yet the guided tour through utopia accounts for only a small part of the novel, which is mostly concerned with a conflict between Todos Santos and the American Ecology Army, a group of eco-terrorists who see this ecology as "the beginning of a horrible future" (161). The narrative focus shifts in every chapter, and the reader is allowed to see the broad outlines of the utopian system, but also witnesses political conflicts, the details of everyday life, as well as a romance plot, all seen through the eyes of more than 30 characters. This (relative) variety of perspectives even tempers Niven/Pournelle's obvious ideological preferences, and the novel ends in a scene in which Thomas Lunan, a reporter from the outside world, rejects the offer to move into this self-enclosed utopia of "industrial feudalism" (167).

The opening chapter in Robert Silverberg's *The World Inside* appears to follow the traditional pattern of a dialogue between a utopian traveler and his garrulous guide, but the reader soon notices that the society of the 24th century is overcrowded, strictly regimented, and inhumane. Yet *The World Inside* is not, as one might expect, a classical dystopia. While chapter one ironizes the form of the utopian dialogue, subsequent chapters ridicule the figure of the dystopian rebel. While several of the main characters revolt against the utopian regime, their rebellion is portrayed as childish and ineffective. In doing so, Silverberg's book undermines one of the mainstays of dystopian fiction, the ritualized conflict between the heroic protagonist and the totalitarian villain. What Silverberg's novel conspicuously lacks is an implied utopia which would lend credibility and dignity to the individuals' rebellion. Because of the absence of this implied utopia, *The World Inside*, as I have shown elsewhere, can be read as an "ambiguous dystopia" (Dietz 1991).

Samuel R. Delany's novel *Triton* reverses the conventional relationship between character and society in utopian fiction. Bron Helstrom, the protagonist, is an outsider in a society based on the principle "all you have to do is know what you want" (117). Throughout the book Bron is in search for a stable identity in a society where all roles have become fluid and voluntary. Ironically, Bron does not recognize that his quest for individuality makes him also a type. Bron's vague unhappiness finally leads him to undergo a sex-change operation, but even his/her new identity fails to offer the desired sense of security, as Bron's basic flaw, his rigidity and intolerance, remains.

Bron's romantic cult of the self can be read as a parody of the egocentrism of the protagonists of dystopias such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or Ayn Rand's *Anthem*. After Bron has been arrested for a short time on a diplomatic mission to Earth, for instance, he casts himself in the role of the suffering dystopian rebel, only to be ridiculed by his friends.

Bron Helstrom could be classified as the ultimate utopian anti-hero. He is a flawed character, wandering through a complex urban environment in search of his identity. Unlike many modernist novels, however, *Triton* focuses its implied critique on the protagonist rather than his society. Bron is the outsider because he believes in fixed social roles and unchanging human nature. In the pluralistic world of Delany's heterotopia, this view is no longer adequate. Therefore, Bron's search for a true self makes him a tragicomic outsider, part rebel, part fool. Bron is, to quote the words of a recent critic, "a pre-revolutionary personality caught in a post-revolutionary society" (Moynan, 197).

Frederik Pohl's *The Years of the City* is entirely structured around a cluster of diverse characters, ranging from criminals to city planners. Each chapter focuses on a different character, though some of them, such as Jocelyn Feigerman, an anti-abortion activist, turn up in chronologically later chapters thanks to the invention of life-extending deep-freezing. While the characters differ widely in their personalities, they all react to New York, and many of them are involved in attempts to make

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Phyllis Gottlieb:

Being an Actor by Simon Callow. Methuen, 1984. This English actor-director who has also worked in the US, and is particularly notable for being the first to portray Mozart in *Amadeus*, belongs to the sturdy British school of actors who don't rely on looks or attitude for success. Here Callow takes a prospective audience through every aspect of the theater from unemployment to fame and back again, with its rewarding and/or abusive encounters with both shrewd and swollen egos, and the rigors of the performer's onstage sweat and terror. There is nothing like a good actor's biography to show a writer how to create a character, and the three pages in which Callow describes how he worked his way into becoming the sniggering genius Mozart alone are worth the price of admission.

Olaf Stapledon by Leslie Fiedler. Oxford Press, 1984. I had never heard of this bio and found it in the remainder bin of a book barn in San Francisco. Fiedler, an essayist always interested in interiors, gives us a tour through the id of Olaf Stapledon, a man who was fearless in the face of the universe, but timid about going anywhere without having his wife along to take care of him. Fiedler looks at him from a psychosexual viewpoint that is often too insistently Freudian but in examining almost everything Stapledon ever wrote, including unpublished work, still shows us an even-handed portrait of the universe maker who gave science fiction writers *Star Maker*, an armature to build their dreams on.

Elizabeth I: A Study in Power and Intellect by Paul Johnson. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988. The respected biographer and historian presents Elizabeth in her peacock Majesty, in a setting of spies and rough politics, with her sharp wit, sparkling mind, and brilliant command of colloquial French, Spanish, Italian, Latin and Greek as well as her magnificent English. Also her deep vanity, jealousy of other women, and hot temper. Here is a picture of her at home, in her mirrored bath, or without her pearls in the shabby black clothes she wore at her private devotions, or at table drinking the light beer she preferred to old ale. Along with a registry of her earthly goods, the prices she paid for oysters, taffets and battlefields, and the amounts she lost through theft and graft, I astonished myself by coming to the conclusion that as a ruler Elizabeth, in spite of Johnson's fervent admiration, was incompetent at using power and would have been lost without the advice of good counsellors—all, alas, men. Whether that interpretation comes from a flaw of Johnson's presentation or I misread him, I don't know, but no one otherwise could fault his depiction of a great monarch, only a little bloodthirsty, who was married to her people and resolutely determined to keep them out of war, with a background that includes other interesting aspects of the (probably, alas! again) virginal Queen, not the least being her status as a contemporary pop culture icon, and the object of sexual dreams in her male subjects.

the city a better place. In Pohl's novel, individuals are agents of change rather than mere representatives of societal virtues or vices. The rich tapestry of colorful characters, from the illegal bang-glider Nurlark to the exuberant figure of Gwenand, a Supreme Court Justice of the future, allows *The Tears of the City* to evade the narrative anemia that has been the bane of so many literary utopias.

All of the texts discussed here—with the exception of *The World Inside*—contain some dynamic elements and follow the old call for a "kinetic utopia" uttered by H. G. Wells in 1905 (5). While the utopians in Silverberg's novel can only imagine growing in size, the other urban utopias are based on the concept of constant evolution. The phrase "think of it as evolution in action" is used as a leitmotif in *Oath of Fealty*, even though we see relatively little social change occur. Delany's *Triton* portrays a society based on the anarchic principle "all you have to do is know what you want," yet even this society feels the necessity for so-called unlicensed zones in which all societal laws have been abolished and where fantasies, art, innovation, but also crime and violence flourish. These unlicensed zones are counter-utopian spaces which keep the larger urban utopia from petrifying and turning into a static dystopia. Pohl's *The Tears of the City* indicates already in its title that it is concerned with the temporal dimension of utopia. Interestingly enough, the book begins with two alternate utopian projects: a proposal for social reform including such measures as the Universal Town Meeting, and a grandiose architectural project. Both plans are realized, but not without having to meet considerable resistance from groups interested in the preservation of the status quo. In the last chapter we read about a more humane society, yet one that still is in need of judges, even if they now are selected by lot from among the citizens. Pohl's novel is thus a utopia-in-the-making which always implies the necessity of further improvement.

Finally, several of these novels contain elements that make them anti-anti-utopias, to use a term coined by Robert C. Elliott in reference to texts that subvert the conventions of dystopian fiction (129). The appearance of the parodic element in recent utopias suggests that the dystopian genre which began as a parody of traditional utopias might by now appear as the established, conventional form which has to be artistically superseded. Parody, as the Russian formalists perceived it, thus can be seen as a force behind the dynamics of genre evolution

(Erich 258-9). While the four novels discussed here might not constitute a general trend, it is significant to note that this tendency towards parody and the blending of utopian and dystopian elements is also observable in other utopias of the 1970s and 1980s (Diets 1987, 161-167).

The World Inside and *Triton* subvert the stereotype of the hero's rebellion against or flight from the technological city, a motif that has been prevalent in novels such as Clarke's *The City and the Stars*, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Sargent's *The Shores of Women*, to name just a few. *The World Inside* also mocks the idealization of rural life found in pastoral utopias, and particularly the trope of the noble savage. Michael Straller is obsessed by a longing to leave the city with its constant temperature, its processed food and its standardized way of living. From old films he has created an idyllic conception of unspoiled nature outside the urbane: "He feels the centrifugal yank toward freedom, and wants to taste a bit of it" (117). The world outside the city, though, does not at all conform to Michael's romanticized notions of a pastoral landscape. After wandering through fields tended by robots, he is arrested by members of a farming commune who intend to sacrifice him to their fertility deity. The green world of arcadia presented as a social alternative by so many dystopias is thus entirely discredited in Silverberg's novel. If the gleaming towers of technological utopianism turn out to be the landscape of nightmares, the simplistic world of rural communities is likewise revealed to harbor aggression and ignorance.

Delany's *Triton* also undercuts the meanwhile stereotypical conventions of dystopian fiction. Bron, as we have seen, plays the role of the dystopian rebel, while he has nothing to rebel against. Bron's possessive and patronizing attitude towards "The Spike," a female movie director, recalls the stereotypical gender relations we find in such dystopias as *Anthem*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or *Fahrenheit 451*, yet Bron ends up lonely and rejected. Delany's "ambiguous heterotopia," as *Triton* is called in its subtitle, thus employs dystopian plot elements, but reevaluates them radically. The urban labyrinth becomes the unlicensed zone, source of creativity and chaos, and the omniscient governmental data banks offer to our narcissistic anti-hero the chance of watching himself on film in an "ego-booster booth" (5).

Pohl's *The Tears of the City* ends in a trial scene which satirizes the crucial debate between the heroic dystopian rebel and the representa-

tive of the evil system that we find in such texts as *Brave New World*, *Ape and Essence*, or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Yet Gwendana is no Grand Inquisitor, and the two recently unfrozen would-be martyrs from the past are merely sentenced to marry each other. After this benign resolution, the protagonists leave the underground courtroom and take the elevator upward in a symbolic journey "past the rocks where the bellowing reptiles were entombed, past the beginning of mammals, past savagery, past history, all the way up, into the clean, kind, civilized air" (334).

How should we, figuratively living in an age of bellowing reptiles, evaluate these four attempts at reviving the literary tradition of the utopian city? If we put these novels in the context of the revival of American utopianism in the 1970s and 1980s, we notice parallels. Silverberg's *The World Inside*, published in 1970, manifests an exhaustion of dystopian *topos*, even though his subversion of dystopian genre conventions does not result in a renewed utopianism. Delany's *Triton*, published in 1976, offers an ambiguous heterotopia that rejects the

static felicity of traditional utopian cities and focuses on the inner development of the protagonist. Yet this *bildungsroman* (or rather *anti-bildungsroman*, as the hero fails to adapt to his society) remains rather shadowy in its depiction of the principles of the utopian society on Triton. Niven/Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty*, on the other hand, lacks *Triton*'s awareness of the dangers of utopian dogmatism, and it envisions a utopia of condominium dwellers living happily under a neo-feudalist system that shows little concern for diversity and freedom. Yet even at their worst, and I clearly consider *Oath of Fealty* the worst of the group, these utopias are important in renewing the old dream of the ideal city. Utopian thinking that denies the city and envisions a pastoral utopia for a happy few is dangerously close to turning into escapist fantasy. After all, as Frederik Pohl reminds us in *The Tears of the City*, the "city" and "civilization" come from the same Latin root, *civitas*, and you can't have one without the other* (13).

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Remaking History by Kim Stanley Robinson

New York: Tor Books, 1991; \$18.95 hc; 274 pages
 reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Interestingly enough, the title of this collection would have been an apt one for Robinson's second novel, *Jehongo*—actually a triptych of linked stories—in which the reader was treated to successive incarnations of the "historical truth" about the Martian revolution. This points to a recurring theme in Robinson's work, facets of which are revealed here.

History is not a fixed body of events; they await re-discovery and re-interpretation, and as at any rate hidden by layers of collective memories, and collective fantasies; and those fantasies themselves are ready to shape the actual course of future history. As a character in "Vinland the Dream" has it, "History is made of the stories people tell . . . True or false, it's the stories that matter to us." (Of course, the character is a politician, Canada's Minister of Culture, which may cast a different light on the quote if you're in a malicious mood. But never mind.) In "Vinland the Dream," a beloved story about history is unmade rather than created, almost the reverse process to Howard Waldrop's wonderful fake-historical narratives (e.g., "The Ugly Chickens").

While history shades into stories, several of the pieces collected here rely more on discourse than action or drama, albeit only one of them. "A Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions," goes so far as to fall outside of the traditional criteria for a story. The lack of high drama is unusual for sf, but several of Robinson's stories wander off the science fiction turf and are set in a past, present, or future near enough to be hardly distinguishable from our world. Some ("Zurich," "Rain-

bow Bridge") have elements of fantasy; most are concerned with human destiny, that subject matter of both history and the better science fiction works.

The fate of our century has not been a peaceful one, and "A History of the Twentieth Century, with Illustrations," follows the depressive itinerary of an historian across the British Isles, as he recounts the wars and massacres of the last hundred years. Devoid of a character, "A Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions" is more dynamic; written as some sort of laboratory experiment illustrating various theories of history, it uses again and again the starting point of Robinson's alternate world story "The Lucky Strike," but each time comes up against some sort of inevitability of war.

These dystopian visions are reinforced by "A Transect," wherein the parallel lives of a North American businessman and a South African black worker intersect for an instant; and "Down and Out in the Year 2000," in which Washington, D.C., is extrapolated for a few more years of economic slump and seen from the point of view of the street people.

Robinson's latest novel, *Pacific Edge*, was a stab at the classic problem of showing the road from our undesirable society to an ideal one, so often missing from literary Utopias. This can't be done in a short story, but fragments of utopias crop up: "The Part of Us that Loves" is set in Zion, a small city North of Chicago dreamt up as a Promised Land by its 19th-century planner (but the real-world dream is overlaid with a gritty vision of the Gospel, and science fiction reduced to a cartoon reading of it); "Rainbow Bridge" and "Muir on Shasta" are both set in

the wilderness surroundings that can make us feel temporarily at one with the world; and of course, on a more comic note, "Zurich" is a tribute to the Swiss's striving for their ideal world of perfect cleanliness.

This split between Dystopia and Utopia can be traced again in the stories more clearly associated with sf. "The Lunatics," for instance, is almost Marxist in its depiction of the prison mines of the Moon, and the workers penned there who can only use force and solidarity to get back at their foremen (and the masters they don't see). But they've been sent there, as far as they can remember, for political dissent, so they might as well look like victims of "real-world socialism" in a Siberian prison camp. "Glacier" is another glimpse of a future dictatorship, this time in the USA, where the advancing icefields are accompanied by a political freeze, the youthful protagonist's parents are both refugees from the ice, and intellectuals suspicious in the eyes of the government.

"Our Town," finally, is a sort of negative Utopia: the happy future city, antithetical to the point of being physically removed from the surrounding world on an inaccessible mesa, owes its prosperity to the oppression of other humans: short and brilliant, but a bit too close to Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" for my taste. There is, however, a difference: unlike those who walk away in Le Guin's story, the one character who leaves the Town tries to effect change, even though he knows the attempt is probably doomed. Just as in "Glacier" or "Down and Out in the Year 2000," where the characters are swamped by major and minor mishaps, but fight on in spite of it all, even if they can't be assured their efforts will result in any change: a sort of existentialist attitude.

The title story, while set in the near century of an alternate world, casts once again a playful and biting look at our world. (In their world, Carter was re-elected, to no one's surprise since "He was running against a flake, I can't remember the guy's name, but he was some kind

of idiot"—I love that line.) Here again, although there is a measure of action and suspense, the real point of the story is in the discussion about the idea of heroes—whether the great men changed history, as well as whether they are needed in films and novels. Robinson stays cleverly ambiguous.

This is a happier future, but it required significant alterations to our past. In "The Translator," interstellar war is averted through well-meaning duplicity; it's a story Robert Shekley could have been proud of, just to remind us of Robinson's breadth.

Another testimonial to the author's versatility is "Before I Wake," originally published in *Interzone*, which indeed reminded me of the catastrophes and time-slips of a J. G. Ballard or a Robert Holdstock: the world is under the curse of sleepiness, with hardly anyone staying awake; and when they think they are, they realize they are dreaming, waking up from dream to dream in a nightmare cascade. The hard-driving scientist protagonist exerts all night control on his life as on a dream. Even the most diligent efforts of interpretation on the part of the critic cannot relate to history all the stories of this book, and this is a case in point, but I must say I found it the most powerful in the volume.

But for all its diversity, the collection exhibits the traits we have come to expect from its author: seamless prose, love for the wilderness, careful description of exotic locales ("A History of . . ." made me—briefly—feel like visiting the Orkneys), and a lot of caring for the people forgotten by history. The stories come from diverse sources, and even if there are minor pieces here ("Muir on Shasta" or "Down and Out . . ." for instance) side by side with the masterworks and the unclassifiable, I really enjoy the mix, discovering the stories new to me and re-appreciating the others with equal pleasure. ▲

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Harmony by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg

New York: Roc, 1991; \$5.50 pb; 473 pages

reviewed by Shira Daeon

In *Harmony*, Marjorie Bradley Kellogg's novel about a theater community of the future, Aristotle's advice to be "the enemy of all pandering to the pleasure of the spectators" is taken to heart. In fact the premise in *Harmony*—that a little theater (the equivalent of today's Off-Broadway) is putting on an innovative show with political overtones, and is having problems because the community (represented partially by the theater's board of directors) disapproves—is so familiar to anyone who has ever worked on a stage that one wonders why this story needs to be placed in a "futuristic" setting.

One could argue that *Harmony* only pulls the veneer of science fiction over what is essentially current social commentary. While the artistic enclave "Harmony" is an American city protected from the "Outside" by a dome, there are very few technological advances present in this "futuristic" world. Kellogg's book is not concerned with the science that makes possible enclosed communities, or the interdependencies that occur specifically because a community is domed (unlike, say, Michael Bishop's *Cascomb Tower*, a novel intimately involved with the details of living in a domed city on earth). Even in the theatrical design of the show "The Gift"—a play whose production (from design phase through epilogue) is the structural backbone of the book—there is no advanced scientific gadgetry present: lasers, holograms and recyclers are paid lipservice to, but only as futuristic props. In *Harmony* the domed city is only a stage on which to play out the book's theme; a platform for a discussion of the interrelationship between art, theater and politics and their uses in environmental activism.

Yet, while the political battles that infuse *Harmony* (rich vs. poor, commercialism vs. artistic expression) take place frequently today, by setting this story in the future Kellogg has raised the stakes. Under *Harmony*'s dome artistic failure has become synonymous with death, since apprentices who fail to measure up are put Outside. (Domers mistakenly believe that there is no viable society left beyond the structures of their walls.)

The novel is narrated by Gwynn Rhys, a technical theater apprentice living under *Harmony*'s dome, who becomes involved with an

acting troupe called the Eye during their production of the play "The Gift." The actors in the Eye come from Tuamututuamutu, an unenclosed island protected from the chemicals of the world by either a geographical quirk or divine intervention. As Ule, one of the actors in the Eye, says:

"... like the human body, the world is a coherent system. If your body falls sick, you don't go separating the parts of it and walling them off from each other. Now, man's medicine is certainly more evolved than man's politics. There the practice is to treat the whole body, taking all its complexity and interrelatedness into account. . . . Think about how much of your human 'body' has been left outside the walls. How long do you think you can manage to go on without it?"

The Eye uses "The Gift" to expound their philosophy, presenting fable about magic, spirituality, and the tragedies that can arise from being politically naïve.

Certainly, using a play for social commentary, or for political gain—as Kellogg's character attempts—is nothing new. Shakespeare used, and commented upon, the device by creating the "play within a play" in *Hamlet* (Prince of Denmark sets up a dumb show to try and expose the hypocrisy at court by "catching the conscience of the King").

Within the genre Anne McCaffrey used the Shakespearean tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* as the centerpiece for "Dramatic Mission," a short story in her fixup *The Ship Who Sang*. In "Dramatic Mission" a shipload of actors go out to present the tragedy to the alien race the Corviki, who have offered to give humanity great scientific advances (i.e. material if not exactly political gain) in exchange for learning how to perform. *Romeo and Juliet*'s familiar love story deepens the McCaffrey piece, adding layering to the conventional romance going on among the cast members, and creating a nice parallel when several actors fall in love with the alien culture: giving up their own humanity (and physical bodies) to embrace life as Corviki. Where McCaffrey allows the play's familiar

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theme to subtly suggest the romantic analogy to the reader, Kellogg's play is fraught with overt symbols of death and disaster.

Also within the genre, but closer to Kellogg's intent of theater as a form of social protest, is Pamela Dean's *Tam Lin*, in which a little-known drama called "The Revenger's Tragedy" is used as a political barb. During the performance the actors warp the original scope and intent of the play, costuming themselves to resemble Blackstock College's faculty. The use of obvious wigs combined with the insinuations present in the script (adultery, abuse) reflect the intolerable, but undiscussable, situation that has arisen because the Queen of the Sidhe is running the Classics Department. The instigating student is fighting for his soul, and is using the play as a mute appeal for help.

Like *Tam Lin*'s student, Kellogg's acting troupe is using a play to fight for their spiritual existence, as well as the world's continuance. "The Gift" is an allegorical fable which shows the death of the native culture (represented by the protagonist's ritualized on-stage murder) when profit motives clash with spiritual values, and the religion loses. Tuamututuamatu is in the midst of a civil war over whether or not to dome. The Eye knows that if the island encloses, then the stations (twelve stations, similar in concept to the Stations of the Cross) cannot be walked. If the Stations are not walked, then man's spiritual compact with the gods will be broken; the gods will no longer entrust mankind with the earth.

The Eye feels that the world might end if the gods are not appeased. To remind their people, and the technological community, of the power of magic (and the need for environmental activism), the actors in the Eye have created a mythic hero, the Conch, who is a political rebel. While the world assumes the Conch must be a single person, Gwinn learns that it takes the entire acting troupe, using their specialized skills in combat, medicine, rhetoric, and computer literacy, to pull off the "magic" the Conch creates.

The Eye's magic become a catalytic force in Gwinn's life. Gwinn starts the book enamored with theater simply as a conduit for design values. Although she knows that she could be put Outside if she does not measure up as an apprentice, she eagerly left a safe but creatively dead life in Chicago to work as an artist under Harmony's dome. While she has always cared passionately about artistic expression, it is through her exposure to the Eye that her political side begins to awaken:

I thought a lot about Art after that, as we settled into the early stages of designing "The Gift." I pondered the relationship of Art and Politics. I hadn't really thought there was one. I mean, wasn't Art about history and romance and philosophy, the Big Topics? Everyday politics didn't seem... well, elevated enough.

As Gwinn learns the truth about Harmony (its closed door policies and willingness to kill and censor to preserve a standard of living) she

finds herself drawn into social activism. Forced into contact with the Eye (both by dint of her job at the theater, and her wish for something truly magical in the world), she ends up falling in love with the vision of a free earth, and with Sam, a magician in the company. Eventually, as she grows to see the group's worldview as truer to reality than their own, she becomes reconciled to their use of the play as a political vehicle.

"It is the actor's job," said Mali quietly, "to make the truth unavoidable."

That is the job of Art, I realized. The hard nut of responsibility at the center of every project and the hardest thing to accomplish, because avoidance of truth is what we are most skilled at, both audience and practitioner.

When John M. Ford grapples with the themes of art and truth from the audience's perspective he has *Jemuel*, a police captain in his novelette "The Illusionist" from *Casino Fortune* note that:

She had in fact found the play nearly unendurable, because it was so very true, too much her life. She had not gone to another of *ola Vivar*'s plays, because she did not want her life fingered over like that again.

Gwinn Rhys, unlike *Jemuel* in the Ford piece, must first approach a play from an analytical perspective. This perspective makes her a great observer, and what she observes best are the technical details that go into the creation of a show, and the people who make theater their life. She notes the smells in a theater shop, the texture of fabrics and that "to grab [the audience's] attention from the start, focus the space so that the seating is an element in the total composition." But Kellogg finds it hard to get away from her political objectives. When discussing perception and reality she notes that "A performance is not always an act. At best it's a direct expression of an ideology."

The fact that Kellogg's actors cannot get away from their political agenda makes her idea of theater almost diametrically opposed to Ford's. In "The Illusionist" Ford's director/playwright *ola Vivar* will not put up with actors who want to use the stage as a platform for their political views. Ford feels that "analyzing any work of real art brings us to the very edge of what we can know." To Ford producing that knowledge, that truth, is the actor's greatest job. To *ola Vivar* a "perfect" performance is worth anything, he will allow nothing to ruin a performance, even the possibility of his own death is not enough reason to call off a show.

But in *Harmony* the Eye has no qualms about ruining a performance to advance their own agenda. During the put-in of "The Gift," the opposition has set a bomb under the stage, triggering it to blow during the special effect cued for the protagonist's death scene. The Eye leaves the trap intact (although they remove most of the explosives). They

prefer to flush the killers out—and allow the audience to believe there was a horrible accident—rather than have a “perfect” performance. The Eye is also more concerned with their group image than with their individual commercial potential. When Mali, their most talented actor, is singled out for a publicity blitz, he declines the honor, even though their world tour will be canceled if he does not acquiesce. Since *Harmony* is social commentary, packaged in a delightfully theatrical wrapping, it is actually believable that the actors are not devastated when their tour is canceled. This laissez-faire attitude towards the job market in acting contrasts sharply with that of Ford’s actors, who are willing to kill rather than have their positions as artists usurped.

Both Kellogg and Ford take their theater quite seriously. They refuse to “pander” to spectacle over the content. Yet, with Ford the Art is in displaying the small and large things that make up a character’s life.

Kellogg believes that Nature is greater than Art and the need to preserve it is worth any risk.

In *Harmony* Kellogg has created a well crafted, action-packed book that takes her extensive knowledge of technical theater, and her deep love for nature, and combines them into an entertaining package. Even if her actors are not as individually interesting as Fritz Leiber’s in “Four Ghosts and Hamlet,” there is a certain earnest charm to Gwinn that makes one enjoy spending 470 pages with her and her friends. When the dust is cleared, the bomb is blown, and the reader discovers who has lived and who has died it is with a sense of satisfaction that the book gets closed. While Kellogg may not be the prose-master that Ford is, this book still does a great job of illuminating life in the theater, especially from one of the more dimly lit angles, behind the stage. ▴

L'Oiseau de feu (1) (2A) by Jacques Brossard

Ottawa: Leméac, 1989; 471 pages

Ottawa: Leméac, 1990; 533 pages

reviewed by Jean-Louis Trudel

To quote a local witticism, in Québec’s literary world, there is a public for everything and a market for nothing. Though not strictly true, it reflects how hard it is to wrest a living from writing in Québec and how much harder it is to make a good living at it. Science fiction is one of these missing markets, except at the juvenile level, and so it remains to a great degree the preserve of the amateur. Yet, since there is no commercial pressure or financial incentive to publish, the amateur can lavish years on stories and novels can have long gestation periods. Thus, Esther Rochon’s three landmark novels, *L’Épaveur du Solaire* (*The Weariness of the Sun*), published in 1985, *Copillage* (translated as *The Shell*, Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1990), first published in 1986, and *L’Espace du diamant* (*Diamond-Space*), published in 1990, were actually conceived over a span of more than a decade. Similarly, the five volume trilogy of Jacques Brossard, *L’Oiseau de feu* (*The Fire-Bird*) was started in 1975, even though the first volume was only released in 1989. The first two volumes were themselves initially composed over an interval of at least three years, from 1975 to 1977. Both bear the mark of thoughtfulness such time can afford and of successive stages of revision and enrichment, with the latest coming at the end of the eighties after a hiatus of a few years.

The first volume sets the scene in the ONO (West-North-West) quarter of the circular city of Manokhsor, with its squalor and its metal angels, its Archonts and its central Tower, and its rebel—Adakhan. The story unfolds like a gaudy pageant of violence, oppression, and death. Every page assaults the reader with a new and weirdly cruel custom, with a discordant world where water is both rationed and plentiful, where going into basements is punishable by *disappearance*, and where myths are up for grabs, with the neighborhood guards speaking in thunderous voices and heretical prophets respectfully escorted by those they defy.

Each neighborhood is surrounded by walls, just like the city of Manokhsor itself, and even the neighborhoods are partitioned into smaller sections. Once the young Adakhan ventures beyond the city walls one night, discovering a red desert instead of the threatening jungle promised by the leaders, and somehow escaping punishment, he burns forever with the will to cross these walls again. The first volume describes his struggles to learn self-mastery and to ascend through the ranks of Manokhsor’s hierarchical society, all the while unaware that he is the pawn of a confrontation between two mysterious factions. He marries, and even gets to see Manokhsor’s king, penetrating within the Park, the green heart of a desiccated city, and standing at the foot of the Tower which rises far above the crowded quarters. Yet, his friends and relatives are stricken down by the powers that secretly rule Manokhsor, and his wife abandons him, taking their son with her, only to later slay herself and her child during one of the bloody holidays decreed by tradition.

It is only when Adakhan is past the first blush of youth, when he has wearied of the fight, though he still yearns to be free, that he is offered the chance to escape. And that the first book ends as his escape attempt begins truly caps one of the more remarkable books in French-Canadian letters, which swept all the Canadian awards in 1990 and which took on successfully one of the hoariest themes in literature—the portrait of

a man who would be free.

The second volume sets out to furnish solutions to the countless mysteries of the first, but this does not sustain the reader’s interest nearly as well. The breathless rhythm set in the first volume flags as the reader suffers first through a lengthy description of Adakhan’s travails underground, as he seeks a way out of Manokhsor and is assailed by hallucinations. The reader must then wade through long expository passages describing Adakhan’s *regarding* as a citizen of the Center, located under the primitive quarters of Manokhsor. The society of the Center also lacks the rugged vitality of Manokhsor in the first volume, and its depiction is flawed by creaking clichés such as the use of alphanumeric codes for the names of the scientists. Adakhan learns that he has lived a greater life than he could imagine, that his fellow city-dwellers were but a short-lived breeding stock for the superior class of scientists who live in the Center. There is much interest, as the Center answers many of Adakhan’s questionings, but also many obvious or not so obvious falsehoods.

Brossard plays with versions of the truth, rewriting from book to book the central myths of each culture or society which thinks it holds the one truth about Manokhsor. This game of myth-making is paralleled by Brossard’s fictional triple-filming of his story, whereby the reader is told that *L’Oiseau de feu* was compiled from various notes and journals by Adakhan Demuthsen, translated by Jussar de Borsacq at the thirtieth century, before being translated into Manx by Jan Altman at the end of the nineteenth century, and being translated into French by Jacques Brossard exactly a thousand years before the dates mentioned by Jussar de Borsacq—whose name is an anagram of Jacques Brossard.

There are constant reminders that the text is a translation: intrusive footnotes by the “translator” which are often instructive but tantalizing, question marks after words whose translation is in doubt, and the use of words and expression which clash with the overall style and language. Among these are short tags in English, like “of course” and Québec idioms, like “pétoux de broute” and “en maudit.” Yet, when the second volume starts introducing lines of the languages spoken in other parts of Manokhsor, they are transcribed as phonetic English, phonetic German, phonetic Arabic . . . Thus, the properly spelled English and Québecois quotes can only be attributed to the translator, thereby reinforcing the illusion of his existence instead of destroying it.

Indeed, Brossard plays to his heart’s content with anagrams and names. The cities named in a biography of Jussar de Borsacq are simple inversions, either letter by letter or syllable by syllable, of present-day cities on Earth: Laertnon, Setibna, Toningwash . . . Similarly, “Adakhan” could be an invention of “Canada,” or a reference to Adakhan’s potential role as a new man—an “Ada(m).” The name of the main opponent of Adakhan’s sponsor in the Center is “Lokhsir,” as in Lucifer. Even “Manokhsor” can be reversed to yield allusions to the French thinker Guy Sorman, or the Québec scientist-writer Pierre Sormany. As for Manokhsor’s currency, it is called “Erb,” and it looks like plasticized grass, which is “herbe” in French.

There are also several references to writers, starting with France’s

Michael Demuth—Adakhan's surname is Demuthsen . . . In the second volume, when Adakhan discovers the "essef" literature that has come down to Manokhsor from the dead past, there are more references—to Verne and to Bellamy among others. The chapters and volumes are themselves interspersed with quotes from writers ranging from Novalis to Gene Wolfe. The play with names and *clis* are reminiscent of Herman Hesse's *Magister Ludi/The Glass-Beard Game*, as are also the long expository passages mingling philosophy and natural science and the detailed portrait of a man's rise in an invented world.

In the end, Adakhan is chosen by one of the factions of scientists which rule the Center, and which fought over him when he still lived aboveground. As the second volume draws to a labored close, it has what time and time again the curiosity of the reader as to the Great Project of Adakhan's faction. It seems clear that Adakhan's faction is planning to overturn the established order. The text ends as Adakhan is about to be informed by the *Vieux*, the old man who played the role of his godfather in Manokhsor, of the nature of this project undertaken by the *Vieux*'s team. Thus, the second volume also concludes with a cliff-hanger, freeing the reader to formulate her or his own theories and explanations of the remaining mysteries of Manokhsor.

In this, the reader is prodded by the many hints furnished by the author. In the first volume, much was made of Adakhan's sexual "anomaly," which was never described explicitly, though an off-hand detail (p. 266) reveals the truth when the reader does not expect it. In the second volume, much is made of the Great Project of the *Vieux*. Profuse clues, such as the equations for calculating escape speed and relativistic motion, are dropped that it is related to spacetime. There are also garbled indications that Mars should feature in the resolution (as the setting): the red desert surrounding the city, historical references to the two moons that once existed, the possibly discordant value for a parallax unit, and especially the existence of a calendar that is almost, but not quite, identical with the length of the Martian year. On the other hand, the accepted value for the inclination of the rotation plane to the orbital plane is almost nil, which would contradict either a Mars or an Earth setting. Finally, Adakhan's recurring dreams

of the whole city groaning and splitting, shaking and shivering, might prefigure a rumbling take-off of the Tower. Isn't the trilogy called the "Fire-Bird"?

Brossard treads a fine line between fantasy and science fiction, especially in the first volume, where it's not clear whether the metal angels and their fiery, invisible grip or the blue crystal lens that sees through solid surfaces will be justified. In the second volume, the angels are indeed mechanical devices equipped with lasers and other weapons. At times, the scientific credibility of the explanations does lag, but that really cannot be made into a criterion . . . Brossard's view of religion as a tool of oppression and his descriptions of rituals devoid of content imposed on the population are scathingly dark. The parallel with the preeminence of Catholicism in Québec before 1960, which Brossard is old enough to have known first-hand, is almost too obvious, but probably genuine.

The most memorable creation of *L'Oiseau de feu* is certainly the character of Adakhan. Brossard avoids the pitfall of creating a character who is irritatingly naïve or foolishly. Yet, Adakhan needs to be a rebel, else there is no story, and so Brossard conciliates the hot-headed recklessness of the rebel driven to uncover the truth and the coolness of the plotters who learn patience and dissimulation in order to craft the vivid portrait of a survivor who never quite loses his daring and spontaneity—or his sense of indignation—even as he reaches middle-age in the first volume. In fact, one of the more intriguing prospects of the second volume is the lure of having a middle-aged rebel as hero. This unusual development is cut short, however, when the Center rejuvenates his spontaneity and gives him the body of a twenty-five year old.

Reviewing a trilogy less than half-way through is an endeavor fraught with perils. Nevertheless, the numerous question marks hanging over *L'Oiseau de feu* are evidence of the success of Brossard's plot in setting up suspense. It could still wind up being simply an Adam and Eve story, with the future fertilizing the past, as the dates of the spurious translations may indicate, but Brossard has accustomed his readers to revelations rather less straightforward. ▴

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Joan D. Vinge Introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*

I first read a moving, beautifully written, mind-expanding novel called *The Left Hand of Darkness* over twenty years ago. It immediately became one of my favorite books, and made Ursula K. Le Guin one of my favorite science fiction writers.

The Left Hand of Darkness, which was published in 1969 and won both the Hugo and Nebula Awards, is a seminal work of what has come to be called "worldbuilding" science fiction. Novels like *The Left Hand of Darkness* create cultures, human and otherwise, that are as "alien" and rich in detail as the physical settings of the distant planets on which they are set. At last, no longer do Joe and Bob climb into their spaceship and fly to another world, to find it's just like 1950s Earth. Books like this one have broadened and enriched the entire field, by adding the social sciences to the "science" in "science fiction."

Le Guin opened another door into the future with *The Left Hand of Darkness*: a door by which more and more talented new women writers could enter the field, without disguising themselves behind male or sexless *nomes de plume*: enter it and actually receive the recognition they deserved, including science fiction's highest honors.

She did all these things, appropriately, by writing a novel that, in both its form and its content, caused readers to stop and look twice at the real world—a world they thought they knew, but which they would probably never see quite the same way again.

When I first read this book, I was an anthropology student in college. Anthropology is, in a nutshell, the study of human beings. It covers every aspect of human existence. Reading science fiction had drawn me into that discipline; once I had taken a course, I realized that anthropology gave me the same sense of sudden parallax—a view from a height of human behavior—that I enjoyed so much in my science fiction reading.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness* the two things, science fiction and anthropology, fused for me, the circle became complete. Although I did not know at that time that I was about to become a science fiction writer myself, *The Left Hand of Darkness* was a seminal work not only in the field, but also for me, strongly influencing the way I would approach my own writing.

I knew at the time what the *K* in Ursula K. Le Guin stood for: Her father was the noted anthropologist A. L. Kroeber, her mother was the writer Theodora Kroeber, the author of *Labi*. An anthropologist's viewpoint seemed evident to me throughout Le Guin's work, particularly in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Anthropology's greatest gift to those who study it is a different way of seeing—the ability to glimpse the forest through the trees. To grow up within a culture is to grow up blind, accepting the patterns of one's own life and community as "normal" and "right," and everything else, *de facto*, as "wrong" or "strange." Anthropology teaches you how to open your eyes. Both the difficulty human beings have in coping with things new and alien, and the understanding that can come of looking those things in the eye without flinching, are at the heart of Le Guin's novel.

I once had an opportunity to talk with Ursula Le Guin at an awards banquet. I told her that my anthropologist friends and I had been impressed by her use of anthropology in creating *The Left Hand of Darkness*, with its fully realized cultures, which are so human and at the same time so alien. She looked somewhat surprised, and said that she had not intentionally approached the novel that way. She must have learned her approach from her parents "by osmosis," she said. She had grown up with that particular way of seeing, taking for granted what most people have to learn like a second language (if they ever learn it at all).

Mythology also plays a singular role in *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Human beings have created myths, seemingly since the dawn of human culture. Mythology was born out of the human need to somehow comprehend and control a world always terrifying in its mystery and unpredictability. Myth and religion are interlocking sets, like jigsaw pieces . . . like trees of different species coexisting symbiotically in the forest of human perception.

Myths are at once as diverse in detail as the cultures that create them, and as universal in their set of underlying themes as the number of fingers on a human hand, or the fact that the human race is made up of two sexes. It is hard for anyone who has studied mythology not to believe that universal archetypes and themes exist; that they have relevance to, and resonate in, every human being. Over and over the same themes recur, in cultures that have been separated by half the earth for millennia at a stretch.

Myths change with their retelling, evolving through time as their cultural context changes—until today classic mythological themes turn up as the fabric of novels from the literature of societies all over the world. Many science fiction and fantasy writers have drawn stories from the myths of our world; science fiction has been called by some critics “the new mythology.”

The Left Hand of Darkness takes its title from one of the myths that are integral to its story. The mythology in *The Left Hand of Darkness* is unique, however, in that its myths are not drawn from those of any human culture here on Earth. Rather, they are drawn from the mythology of the people of Gethen, the fictional world on which the story is set. The Gethenians are human—but with a difference. Their myths strike universal resonances in us because they address the universal human themes of the myths we already know: Love, anger, lust for power, the question of how we came to exist . . . what makes us human.

These myths are profoundly human—and yet, like the Gethenians, different. There is, as an observer in the book says, “the question of sex.” The people of Gethen are neither male nor female, but at the same time, they are both. Gethenians are sexually neutral except for a brief period each month when they enter *kemmer*, and take on a physical sexual identity—either male or female, depending on the circumstances. Any Gethenian can father a child; any Gethenian can become a mother. Frequently they have been both, at different times in their lives.

Their various societies, governments, and religions have developed along lines which are familiar by standards any human would recognize. And yet all these things are affected in subtle but profound ways by the Gethenians’ lack of two separate sexes.

The protagonist of the novel is Genly Ai, the Envoy sent by the Ekumen—the league of other human worlds—to make first contact with the Gethenians. He believes that his training, and the background data he has been given, have prepared him to understand the Gethenians. He could not be more wrong. Genly Ai is no case of “testosterone poisoning”—he is patient, thoughtful, and (he believes) open-minded man. But he is also young and inexperienced. What he fails to recognize for far too long, in his dealings with the Gethenians, is that he is, in his mind, a *man first*, and all the other aspects of his humanity are secondary to that identity.

As a result, Genly Ai, who at first seems to have everything under control, becomes the victim of his own unwitting prejudices. The Ekumen’s member worlds and their populations appear to have overcome most of the problems which plague us now—apparently they live in peace and economic security, with no visible racial prejudice. There is apparent sexual equality, at least on the level of the Ekumen’s government—the preliminary report on Gethenian society is given by a woman, and there are women among the Ekumen’s official representatives. The humans of the Ekumen even possess the ability to mind-speak—which makes it impossible to lie in communicating with another person, and which should, theoretically, allow human beings to genuinely understand one another.

And yet Genly Ai’s outlook is profoundly sexist (and, as a corollary, homophobic); a fact which the reader cannot help seeing, at the same time that Ai himself is completely incapable of seeing it. He constantly perceives the Gethenians as “men,” excusing it by saying that he has no better term, because “it” does not serve for human beings . . . and neither, evidently, does “she.” (One is reminded of Simone de

Beauvoir’s remark that there are two kinds of people in the world, human beings and women, and when women attempt to act like human beings, they are accused of acting like men.) Genly Ai’s attitude toward women is so much a part of his nature that he can’t see the forest for the trees; and so inevitably he loses his way in Gethenian society.

Everything he dislikes about Gethenians is characterized as “female,” “feminine,” or “effeminate.” Through most of the book he repudiates Therem Harth rem ir Estraven, the Gethenian noble and politician who has been his staunchest supporter: He is unable to let himself himself trust, or empathize with, Estraven’s actions, and therefore he cannot comprehend them. Only when the two of them are thrown together at least in a fearsome exile on the Ice does Ai come to understand that his inability to trust Estraven comes from his own suppressed sexual tension—his fear of acknowledging it; his fear of the “Other,” the uncertainty and anxiety of a man alone for over two years among strangers, “men” who could at any moment become women.

The Gethenians, for the most part, are much more sanguine about the differences between Genly Ai and themselves. They understand both what it is to be male, and what it is to be female; they understand that the two are halves of a whole, neither aspect superior, or inferior, to the other. Perhaps that is why they have an easier time accepting him personally, and accepting also the notion that every other human out there among the stars is just like him, a person with only half a sexual identity. They sometimes refer to him as “a pervers,” meaning someone in a constant state of *kemmer*; and yet there is little real stigma attached to the condition. Only Argaven, the mad king of Karhide, finds the idea of a universe of “pervers” horrifying.

It is through Estraven’s eyes that we finally see Genly Ai clearly. Estraven, although “he” is not without his own troubles, both past and present, is a person of great vision and integrity. He is also free to see the things that Ai cannot permit himself to see. To Estraven, Genly Ai is young, alone, vulnerable—“even his name was a cry of pain!”—and, to Estraven’s eyes, remarkably brave. Estraven’s response to the Envoy’s arrival on Gethen is both a profound intellectual fascination, and a profound human compassion that Ai himself would probably perceive as maternal.

Genly Ai comes to know, to accept, and even to love Estraven. Once Ai has come to terms with his own doubt and fears, he overcomes them to the point where the androgenous Gethenians begin to seem more “real,” more “right” than his own kind. When the other Ekumen representatives arrive at last, they seem to his eyes to be alien. But even so he cannot answer with any confidence or even self-awareness when Estraven asks him, “How does the other sex of your race differ from yours? Are they a different species?”

“No. Yes. No, of course not, not really,” he answers, and says that real equality between the sexes does not exist even on worlds where women and men “participate equally in society.” The women still do all the Women’s Work.

“Are they mentally inferior?” Estraven asks.

He answers, “I don’t know. . . .” But his further examples of their differences strongly suggest that women must be inferior. Women have always been the Other, different, alien, in male-dominated society. And throughout history human beings have found it difficult, if not impossible, to live with one another’s differences. Uncertainty turns too easily to defensiveness, then hostility, in the process reducing the Other—whether defined by sex, by religion or the color of skin—to subhuman status. After all he has been through, all he has learned about Gethen and himself, Ai is still unable to break his own cultural conditioning long enough even to consider how the repressiveness of a male-dominated human culture might limit women’s opportunities to be equally “inventive” and “creative”—in terms also defined by males, of course. “In a sense,” he admits to Estraven, “women are more alien to me than you are. With you I share one sex, anyhow. . . .” This, even though he can mind-speak with women.

Le Guin comments, in her introduction to one edition of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, that science fiction does not show us the future—it shows us the present; it is not a prediction, but a metaphor. Genly Ai is a native of future Earth; we are left to wonder whether men on all the worlds of the Ekumen are left equally unlightened by their cultural conditioning. The fact that women play a significant role in the Ekumen’s governance suggests that perhaps an effort is being made

somewhere to rectify that problem. (Unfortunately the situation seems even more relevant—and more depressing—in 1991 than it did over twenty years ago.)

Genly Ai still has a lot to learn, too . . . but by the end of the novel he has come a long way toward the edge of the forest. He has learned to accept both the male and the female in Gethenians without fear. It is the first step—and a big one—toward learning to accept those things in himself and his own people; toward seeing male and female not as "two separate species," but as *yin* and *yang*; two halves of a whole, a spot of *yin* lying within the heart of *yang*, a spot of *yang* within the heart of *yin*.

Themes of duality—both symbolic and concrete—suffuse *The*

Left Hand of Darkness, Gethenian society, and Gethenian mythology; just as they do our own daily lives. Male/female, light/darkness, *shifgrethor* and *nunath*, define the Gethenians' human identities, and the way they view their world. But the real lesson Gethen has the potential to teach, both to Genly Ai and to the rest of humanity, is that none of these things are opposites. Black and white do not exist in a vacuum—they are, instead, the endpoints that define an infinitely subtle continuum.

The left hand of darkness is light. ▶

Joan D. Vinge lives in Chappaqua, New York. This introduction will appear in the *Easton Press* edition of *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Limbo by Bernard Wolfe

New York: Carroll & Graf, 1987; \$4.95 pb; 413 pp.

reviewed by F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre

The first Cyberpunk novel was published in 1952, long before most of today's Cyberpunks had suckled their first cadmium damper rod. The book was *Limbo*, by Bernard Wolfe, and it's coming back to a nightmare near you.

Many of authors can boast of holding down at least one unusual job before they became professional wordsmiths. (Me! I only had *normal* jobs. I counted platypus eggs at the Melbourne Platypusery, and got shot out of a cannon in Chipperfield's Circus.) Bernard Wolfe's career was remarkable: after graduating from Yale with a degree in psychology, Wolfe spent eight months of 1937 in Mexico as Leon Trotsky's bodyguard, secretary, and number-one disciple. After Trotsky got his cranium perforated by one of Stalin's hooligans in 1940, Wolfe penned non-fiction tomes with such promising titles as *Hypnotism Comes of Age* and *Plastics: What Everyone Should Know*. Then, in 1950, Wolfe began writing his brilliant dystopian novel, *Limbo*.

In the fifties, many respected doctors and psychologists still believed that mental illnesses and psychopathic criminal tendencies could be cured by radical lobotomy. *Limbo* takes that premise one step further: into a world where—after World War Three's nuclear fiasco—prefrontal lobotomies are doled out like aspirin, and the saviours of mankind are the Volamps—the Voluntary Amputees.

Wolfe gleefully quotes Matthew 18:8 ("If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off.") Thanks to Immoob—the post-nuclear doctrine of voluntary amputation—citizens can experience the ultimate disarmament. Any arm or leg which commits an anti-social act is sliced off, and replaced with a brand-new cybernetic prosthetic limb—stronger, faster, more dexterous than flesh, and incapable of committing any evil act. In the Immoob world of *Limbo*, a citizen's status is measured by how many of his or her arms and legs have been replaced with prosthetics. Males have the Volamp advantage over females, since men possess a fifth limb which can commit an anti-social act, and can therefore be amputated . . . and be replaced with a fifth cybernetic cylinder. Wolfe is quick to make a joke about "fifth-column aggression," and he mentions that the cybernetic penis is a phallus.

But in Wolfe's dystopia, not all the disciples of Immoob are Volamps. There are also the Anti-Prox, who submit to multiple amputation and castration but who refuse—as a matter of conscience—to obtain replacement limbs. Wolfe's storytelling skill makes this orgy of amputation seem chillingly plausible. . . . and he anticipates, by three decades, the amputation cult in John Irving's borderline-sf novel *The World According to Garp*, in which women make their voices heard by cutting out their own tongues. Wolfe's *Limbo* world—populated by men and women with synthetic limbs, or who attain a state of Limb-Zero—is a synthetic Limbo. (One of Wolfe's more arcane bits of wordplay.)

Limbo is chock-full of puns, palindromes, psychedelic drugs, sadomasochism, triskelions, and learned references to just about everybody from Alfred Korzybski to Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong. Practically every character in *Limbo* is a disciple of Norbert Wiener, the creator of cybernetics. Wiener's role as the messiah of *Limbo*'s world is comparable to Aldous Huxley's use of Henry Ford as the messiah in *Brave New World*.

Limbo also has lots of good old copper-bottomed swearing. *Limbo* is surely the first published novel ever to contain the words "fuck," "shit," "ass," and the taboo-est taboo-word of all: "orgasm."

Years before Alfred Bester and Harlan Ellison injected typographical experiments into their sf, Bernard Wolfe did it in *Limbo*. One whole page of his book is occupied by a single immense boldface NO, and a later page consists entirely of a colossal YES. Elsewhere, the typeset text mutates into crude hand-drawn squiggles to indicate the hero's mental state. The book is flecked with manic illustrations by Wolfe and a few of his cronies. The strangest illustration depicts an Immoob man—armless, legless, castrated—about to be attacked by a naked woman with a hypodermic needle. New arms and legs are sprouting from her breasts. Didn't I meet these people at last year's WorldCon?

For modern readers, the book has ironic resonances which Wolfe himself could never have anticipated back in 1952. One character is named Rambo; he spends most of his time in the jungle, wondering where his next war is coming from. The favorite sport of the Volamps is a game called "D&D." (But no dungeons, no dragons; in order to play *this* sort of D&D, you've got to pop round to the amputation clinic.) The hero of *Limbo* is a scientist-author who leaves industrial society and emigrates to a remote island in the Indian Ocean. (Did somebody mention Arthur C. Clarke?)

The most disturbing of Wolfe's vintage-1952 predictions is the one that came true: in his futureworld of 1990, women and non-whites *still* haven't attained equality with white males. Blacks are forced to demonstrate for equal access to Immoob: they want the government to hack off their limbs as readily as it attends to the amputation of Caucasians. The cause is led by a group called the NAACP (National Association for the Amputation of . . .)

Whatever happened to the man who invented Cyberpunk? After leaving Leon Trotsky's employ, Bernard Wolfe retained his mentor's political beliefs. Wolfe's non-sf novel, *The Great Prince Dies* (1959), is a thinly-veiled fictional account of Trotsky's murder, and it depicts him heroically. In the late fifties and early sixties, Wolfe wrote humor pieces for *Playboy*—including a brilliant short story, "The Everlasting Penny," which is one of the best comic fantasy tales ever written. (Fantasy anthologists please note.) Accepting an offer to write a screenplay on the life and death of Trotsky, Bernard Wolfe moved to Hollywood, bought a fancy house on a small hill overlooking Benedict Canyon, and put in a swimming pool . . . yet he never managed to renounce his Trotskyist politics. (Some passages in *Limbo* quote Marx approvingly; other passages in the same novel are bawdy burlesques of communist dogma. Some of Wolfe's red herrings are more Red than others.)

Bernard Wolfe spent his money freely, and finally died (of a heart attack in 1985) in the same Hollywood charity ward previously occupied by Larry Fine of the Three Stooges. Wolfe was never prolific, and most of his writing has dated badly. But *Limbo* is his shining monument.

In *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels* (Xanadu Publications Ltd., London, 1985), critic David Pringle hails *Limbo* as "the most ambitious work of science fiction, and one of the most successful, ever to come out of America." *Limbo*'s disciples are legion. On the strength of *Limbo*, Harlan Ellison approached Bernard Wolfe to contribute to the *Dangerous Visions* anthologies. (The hero of *Limbo* faces every situation with a

wisecrack and a four-letter word... it is possible that this novel influenced the young Harlan Ellison? No, I guess not.)

I first encountered *Limbo '90* (same book, British title) in a bookstall bin near Manchester Piccadilly in 1964. The book has frightened me, inspired me, and shaped the themes of my own sf stories. Carroll and Graf have reissued *Limbo* in paperback for a new generation

of readers. Whether your own legs are flesh or cyber-chrome, they should run to the nearest bookstore straight away, so you can get your hands (real or synthetic) on this brilliant, astonishing, one-of-a-kind masterpiece. ▶

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David Ketterer

The Establishment of Canadian Science Fiction (1958-1983)

(Part II)

This completes our serialisation of Chapter 6 of David Ketterer's forthcoming book, *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy, due out from Indiana UP in May. References to other chapters appear occasionally.*

There are numerous English- and French-Canadian titles—many the single relevant works of a particular writer—that fall outside the categories I have treated above. A selective chronological account of such English-Canadian fiction titles follows (where known, an author's non-Canadian origin is noted).

The German-born Elizabeth Mann Borgese, the daughter of the novelist Thomas Mann and Dalhousie University professor of political science, published some SF stories, including, "For Sale, Reasonable" (*Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, July 1959; reprinted in *Vision*), a satirical evocation of the machine-dominated world of 1979, retitled "To Whom It May Concern" in her 1960 collection of that title (New York and London). In *The Time of the Titans* (London, 1961) by a former professor of genetics at the University of Alberta, Leroy P. V. Johnson, is about a battle between Earth and half-vegetable beings from Mars. In John Aylesworth's near-future satire, *Foe, Fie, Fo, Fum* (New York, 1963), Judd Morrow, a Manhattan advertising employee, wakes up to discover he has turned into a giant, a modern-day Gulliver.

English-born Calgary writer J. Brian Clarke's first sale, "Artifact," about a possibly dangerous alien gadget found in space, was the June 1969 cover story for *Analog* (his "Expediter" stories have also appeared there). In Harold W. G. Allen's *The Edge of the Universe* (Toronto, 1970), an enigma discovered in space three centuries in the future leads to philosophical revelations that harmonize evolution and the Bible.

In English-born Adrienne Anderson's *Wings of the Morning* (London, 1971), Quinn Rodmore's frozen body is reanimated in the year 2020. In E. M. Osborn's *Short Visit to Egon* (Victoria, B.C., 1971), an astronaut is marooned on a planet of brotherly love and truth. Scottish-born University of Victoria English professor Stephen Scobie's "The White Sky" (in *Fourteen Stories High*, edited by David Helwig and Tom Marshall, Ottawa, 1971) is a postcatastrophe tale, and his "The Philosopher's Stone" (*Grazer*, June 1975; reprinted in *Other Canadas*) is a human transmutation story set in 3516. In Orville E. Ault's *Johnny Transplant* (1972), a nineteen-year-old, after a motorcycle accident, receives the brain of a writer who committed suicide.

In *The Lord's Pink Oceans* (Boston, 1972), by the Scottish-born New Brunswick writer David Walker, all the world's oceans but one are polluted by deadly algae. Eric Koch's *The Leisure Riots* (Montréal, 1973) is set in 1980, when redundant executives are denied tension-producing work. Jim Wilber's *Paravind* (Toronto, 1973) focuses on a computerized society of the twenty-first century. Bruce Powie's *The Last Days of the American Empire* (Toronto, 1974) deals with the uprising of the starving masses of Europe and Africa in the coming century. Douglas Hall's *The Worshipers* (Toronto, 1974) is an account of a near-future religion. John (Hollis) Keith Mason (after a silence of thirty-two years) published three more stories: "Time Scope" (*Vortex*, March 1974), "A Planet Called Cervantes" (in *New Writings in SF 26*, edited by Kenneth Bulmer, London, 1975), and "Arctic Rescue" (in *Tomorrow: New Worlds of Science Fiction*, edited by Roger Elwood, New York, 1975). The *Cage: A Visual Novel* (Toronto, 1975) is English-born Martin Vaughan-James's surrealist, marginal-SF attempt "to destroy from within the worn out sign language of our culture." In Neil Crichton's *Revus* (Don Mills, Ontario, 1976) a forty-year-old man is given the chance to relive his life when he finds himself transported from 1990 back to 1976 and only twenty-six years old. Augustine Funnell's two mediocre space operas, *Bandyback and Rebel*

of Merka (both Toronto, 1976), are the only Canada titles in the ill-fated Canadian formula SF series, Laser Books, published by Harlequin Books. Marie Jakober's *The Mind Gods* (Toronto, 1976) is a slow-moving philosophical work set among the barbarians on the abandoned polluted Earth of 2350. *The Immortal Soul of Edwin Carlyle* (Toronto, 1977) is Blanche Howard's story of a man who uses science to unlock the soul's secrets. Missoula-born Vancouver resident J. Michael Yates's *Faces in Elsewhere: New and Selected Fiction* (Vancouver, 1977) contains twenty-six New-Wave experiments in technological surrealism. Philippe van Ryndt's *The Trial of Adolf Hitler* (Toronto, 1978) is an alternate history. Patrick Watson's *After Ego* (Toronto, 1978) is a thriller about a mad McGill scientist's attempts at matter transmission. And M. A. Bramstrup's *Cowrier* (with illustrations by Owen Oulton; Woodstock, New Brunswick, 1982) is about an elite soldier of the future who wants to be a civilian poet.

Garfield Reeves-Stevens, who works the SF/fantasy interface and has gained a reputation as the Canadian horror master (see chapter 8), deserves to be singled out. His career began with the fast-paced and very commercial *Bloodshift* (Toronto, 1981). A retired contract killer is forced by a coven of establishment vampires to attempt to locate and kill a renegade woman vampire who aims to overthrow the Old Ways and interfere with Phoenix Project, their secret plan for a Final Solution to the Human Problem. The research associated with the Phoenix Project provides the SF element. This book was reprinted in the United States in 1990 and is to be filmed as *Phoenix: The Final Cure*.

As for the famous English-Canadian expatriates treated in chapter 4: van Vogt published some thirty titles between 1959 and 1983, including ten collections; Dickson published some fifty titles, including three juveniles, two collections, and four anthologies; Horace Gold produced seven anthologies and a 1976 selection of his *Galaxy* editorials; and Laurence Manning's 1983 story series was reissued as *The Man Who Awoke* (New York, 1975).

In addition to E. J. Pratt (see chapter 2) and Earle Birney (see chapter 4), English Canadians (and one Polish Canadian) have also made a showing in the relatively unexploited areas of SF poetry and drama. Stanislaw Michalski's *Eskimokawa* ("Eskimo Eve"; Montréal, 1964), written in rhyming Polish verse, concerns two survivors of an atomic holocaust who meet in an igloo in the Arctic. As noted above, Phyllis Gotlieb, arguably Canada's premier SF novelist, is also Canada's premier SF poet. In such works as *Speeches for Doctor Frankenstein* (Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, 1966), "Orations for Sasquatch, Man and Two Androids" (in *Poems for Voices*, Toronto, 1970), and elsewhere, Margaret Atwood's poetry displays an SF quality that the late critic and fan Susan Wood has called "The Martian Point of View" (1974; see the Bibliography). The inspiration for the poems collected in Gwendolyn MacEwen's *The Armies of the Night* (Toronto, 1972) is factual (man's setting foot on the Moon), fantastical, and science-fictional. Also to be noted are Alden Nowlan's "O'Sullivan's World" (1969), "The Moon Landing" (1971), and "Plot for a Science-Fiction Novel" (1971) (all reprinted in *Other Canadas*); such Jeni Cousyn poems (heavily influenced by SF writers) as "Preparation of Human Pie" (1970), "Specimen 2001, Probably 21C" (1972), and "What Can We Make to Replace a Man" (one of the poems inspired by the writings of Brian W. Aldiss in her *Christmas in Africa*, Vancouver, 1975) (all reprinted in *Other Canadas*); John D'Arcy Badger's poetic political manifesto, *The Artburian* (Toronto, 1972), which envisages a radical utopia; Tom Farley's *The Last Space Man* (Ottawa, 1974); the SF section of Sansoucy North's *Temple into Time* (Ottawa, 1976); John Robert Colombo's collection of "found poems," *Mostly Monsters* (Toronto, 1977), and

Off Earth (Toronto, 1987); Brian Henderson's *The Viridical Book of the Silent Planes* (Toronto, 1978); and Douglas Barbour's "Moon-walks" (in *Other Canadas*).

As for SF drama, three examples will have to suffice. Louis Capoen's *The True North Blueprint Trilogy* (Toronto, 1972) chronicles the future rise to power of a world dictator. Isabelle Ford's *Say Hi to Owsley* (Toronto, 1975) is a children's play about two Martians who crash-land on Earth. *Frankenstein: The Play* (Toronto, 1976), an adaptation by Alden Nowlan and Walter Learning, is unusually faithful to Mary Shelley's novel.

There also exists a significant amount of French-Canadian SF not accounted for in my categories above. In Ronald Després's *Le sculpteur intertemporel: Journal du docteur Jan Von Fries* (Montréal 1962), a scientist decides to destroy the human race in order to create something better. Robert Gurik's *API 2967* (Montréal, 1967; English translation by Marc P. Gélinas, 1974) is an unusually effective and clever comedy about a couple who resist a scientifically advanced dystopian world by eating an unknown object—an apple. In Jean Tétreau's *Les nomades* (Montréal, 1967), a young woman struggles to survive in a post-apocalyptic-catastrophe world. In Emmanuel Cocke's amusing satire, *Ya voir au ciel si j'y suis* (Montréal, 1971), Jesus Tanné (Jesus Ped Up), a special investigator, saves the world of 2057 from catastrophe. Maurice Gagnon's much heralded *Les tours de Babylone* (Montréal, 1972), winner of the Grand Prix de l'Actuelle, is set on the post-nuclear-dissaster Earth of 2380, where Sèvere, a civil servant from Babylon, chooses the anarchic world of the Savages over the totalitarian "brave new world" of Babylon.

In the banner year of 1974, six Québec SF titles appeared. André-Jean Bonelli's *Leona; ou, Autrofois le ciel était bleu* (Jonquiète) (the first and only title of the "DeMAIN aujourd'hui" series devoted to "science fiction and esoterism" that qualifies as SF) concerns yet another repressive society in a polluted world and the quest of a sixteen-year-old girl who, on a mountain, discovers the sky's true color. Roger Des Roches's *Religés de l'Arctique* (Montréal) makes use of the techniques of the *nouveau roman* and features an extraterrestrial wanderer. Jean Ferguson's *Centes ardeurs du pays mauve* (Montréal) contains eight futuristic short stories featuring robots, mutants, and supercomputers. Marcel Moussert's *La patenteuse* (Montréal) is a satirical piece about five Québécois who are attempting to build a perpetual-motion machine when they are captured by the crew of a spaceship. And Esther Rochon's first book, *En hommage aux araignées* (Montréal), also appeared.

Rochon, who was born in Québec City in 1948 and now lives in Montréal, turned to writing after studying mathematics and has become an important figure in French-Canadian SF. Indeed, she is one of the three major figures, the others being Jean-Pierre April and Élisabeth Vonnarburg. On the SF/fantasy borderline, *En hommage aux araignées* begins in the country of the Asvans (a metaphor for Québec), where precivilized natives rub shoulders with tourists from technological societies. One of the Asvans enters the city of death, lives in its underground areas, and draws its map before leaving. This poetic story is the second volume of a trilogy, the first volume of which has appeared only in German as *Der Trümmen in der Zitiadelle* (Munich, 1977).

During the 1975-83 period, the production of SF novels and story collections slowed down and then gradually accelerated. Jean-François Sornayak was born in Paris in 1943, lived in Argentina, came to Montréal in 1957, and is a Canadian External Affairs economist. He published three surrealist titles: *Les grimaces* (Montréal, 1975), a collection of short stories on the themes of dehumanization and extreme uniformity, *Le diable du Mahani* (Montréal, 1978), about the discovery by a disillusioned 1960s revolutionary in Manitoba of an erotic utopia established beneath Lake Mahani by a Japanese and his society of women, and *La planète à mouvement* ("Chroniques du futur," #5; Longueuil, 1982), about an erotic love affair between a woman and the alien planet she visits; the planetary intelligence incarnates itself as another woman.

Louky Bersianik's *L'Égouillonne, roman triptyque* (Montréal, 1976; translated by Gerry Denis, Alton Hewitt, Donna Murray, and Martha O'Brien as *The Egouillonne*, Victoria, 1981) is a philosophical feminist critique of our patriarchal society and the sexism of the French language as viewed by a female extraterrestrial. The satire is often

simplicistic and degenerates into polemic, the narrative is fragmented, repetitious, and overlong, yet there is much of interest here. It inspired a National Film Board video version.

The ambitious trilogy by Monique Corriveau (pseudonym of Monique Chouinard), *Compagnons du soleil* (1. *L'étoile de feu*, 2. *La lune noire*, 3. *Le temps des chats*) (Montréal, 1976), treats the ever-popular division of a seemingly utopian future society (the state of Xantou) into two groups—the elite Companions of the Sun who live by day, and the put-upon Black Moon People of the night, with whom the young privileged hero, Oskim, comes to sympathize—and the inevitable revolution. Gerard Bessette's *Les Anabropsides* (Montréal, 1977) is a fine experimental prehistoric tale about the beginning of storytelling. Louis-Philippe Hébert's *La manufacture des machines* (Montréal, 1977) is a collection of short Kafkaesque texts offering detailed descriptions of machines and mechanized institutions. Alain Bergeron's notable *Un été de Jessica* (Montréal, 1978) is about a privileged haven on Mars inhabited by 180 elderly millionaires who enjoy sexual relations with their perfect androids and the complications posed by a nine-year-old female mutant and war with other alien colonists. In *La mors... de toutes façons* (Montréal 1979), by the well-known UFO enthusiast Claude MacDuff, a son's revenge is facilitated by an apparatus that projects the spirit of his father's murderer into other bodies on the point of death.

Five of the nine titles that appeared in 1980, a second banner year, are of interest. Jean-Pierre April's first book publication and the second volume (following Vonnarburg's 1980 *L'œil de la nuit*) in the "Chroniques du futur" line was *La Machine à explorer la fiction* (Longueuil). This seven-story collection included (among its two previously unpublished stories) "Coma-90," a 100-page meditation on death and life after death; it elicited comparisons with Philip K. Dick. (Born in 1948, April has become a major figure in Québec SF; he teaches literature at the college level in Victoriaville and is a member of the editorial collective of the Québec SF magazine *imagine*...) Turn-of-the-last-century close encounters of the third kind in the Laurentians figure in François Barcelo's well-structured *Agnor, Agnor et Agnor* (Montréal). Roch Carrier's *Les fleurs violettes-elles n'ont que la terre?* (Montréal), a philosophical tale with SF elements that tells how a man's life was changed by a mysterious ray from space, started well but runs out of steam. And Gilles Rivard and Jean Cloutier published *La planète guenille* (Montréal), a dreamlike, surrealist work.

Élisabeth Vonnarburg helped René Beaulieu polish the nine SF/fantasy stories about coming of age in what seems to be a post-nuclear-catastrophe world, collected as *Légende de Virmie* (Longueuil, 1981), the third book in the "Chroniques du futur" series. This collection received one of Québec's annual SF awards, a Boréal, as did Beaulieu's 1980 story "Le gai bleu."

Mathematician and computer-assisted translator Agnès Guillard's outstanding journal-form novel, *Les corps communicants* (Montréal, 1981), deals intelligently with many basic philosophical questions. She also published two outstanding Boréal-award-winning novellas: *Coincidence* (in Jean-Marc Gouanvic's anthology *Espace imaginaire* 1, Montréal, 1983) and *Les virus-ambiances* (*imagine*..., Winter 1982).

Daniel Sermin, born in Montréal in 1955, is another important figure in Québec SF and, since 1979 (after studying history and library science), one of its few full-time writers. He began publishing in the fanzine *Regnum* in 1975 and is currently a member of the editorial collective of *Solaris* (as *Regnum* was renamed). Thus far he has published fifteen books, including works for adolescents and children. His fourth book, *Le vieil homme et l'Épave* ("Chroniques du futur," #4; Longueuil, 1981) is his first for adults; of the six pessimistic stories collected dealing with species guilt and possible suicide, the best are the two from the "Exode" series (based on the presence in the solar system of a group of humans, the Eryméens, with an advanced technology apparently acquired from the extraterrestrials). His major work to date, *Les mîandres du temps* ("Chroniques du futur," #6; Longueuil, 1983), is the tale of a young telepath who agrees to submit to a formal scientific evaluation of his powers. A sequel, *Chorono-reg*, is forthcoming.

L'enfant du cinquante nord (Montréal, 1982), an impressive work by the Swiss-born Pierre Bilon, who prefers not to associate himself with SF, won the Grand Prix de la SF française in 1983. It considers the ethical questions involved in the case of a young boy who has mysterious healing powers. The conflicted protagonist of Jean Basile's *Le*

piano trompette (Montréal, 1983) must decide whether to save the world after the explosion of a nuclear warhead in Alaska irradiates Montréal and alters its climate. In Denis Côté's assured *Les parallèles défilés* (Montréal, 1983), the young protagonist and an American telepath contact aliens in the UFOs that menace a small northern settlement. Robert Lemieux and Gilles Aoussant, in *Il est un Pan 2000* (Verdun, Québec, 1983), have four people travel by hypnosis to a goofy future where Montréal has been flooded and Florida is covered with snow. In the cause of Gilles Tremblay's lackluster attempt to reconcile the Québec intellectual with his passion for sport, *Les Nordiques sont disparus* (Boucherville, 1983), 15,000 people at a hockey game in Québec City disappear into another temporal dimension. The four anthologies that also appeared in 1983 (see below) make that another particularly significant year in what is increasingly referred to as "Québécois" SF or SFQ.

Children's SF: Hughes, Martel, and Others

Canada's premiere writer of SF juveniles is a woman, the English-born Monica Hughes (b. 1925), who lived in Egypt, England, Scotland, and Zimbabwe before coming to Canada in 1952. This is not only a sign of improving antixist times, it is also a characteristic of Canadian literature generally and of much contemporary SF that many of the best writers are women. It is by exploiting one of SF's most important missions—suggesting ways in which the world can be improved—that female and feminist writers have contributed so powerfully to a genre that was once a bastion of male chauvinism. Without being overly didactic, Hughes uses SF in particular (she also writes historicals and realistic fiction for adolescents) to encourage humanistic values in solving ethical dilemmas and a respect for nature. She received the Canadian Vicky Metcalf Award for her work in 1981, and for two years running (1982, 1983) she won the Canada Council Children's Literature Prize.

In the first of her thirteen crisply written, provocative SF juveniles, *The Tomorrow City* (London, 1978), the heroine, Caro, opposes the ruthlessly efficient computer invented by her father that rules the City of Thompsonville. A couple of novels directly reflect Hughes's experience of the harsh, alienating Canadian landscape. *Beyond the Dark River* (London, 1979) and *Ring-Rise, Ring-Set* (London, 1982) are both set in future Canadas. In the first, set in the vicinity of Edmonton (where Hughes lives), a Hurterite boy and a Cree-Indian girl seek a cure for a mysterious illness that has ravaged his community following a nuclear catastrophe. In the second (a runner-up for the Guardian Award), which takes place in the technological City in the Hill and the wastes of Canada's Far North, it is feared that the ring of meteor wreckage encircling Earth's equator will cause another ice age. The alienation-inducing setting is transposed to other worlds in *Earthdark* (London, 1977), set on the moon, and in the fine trilogy set on the interstellar lighthouse planet *Isis: The Keeper of the Isis Light* (London, 1980), *The Guardian of Isis* (London, 1981), and *The Isis Pedlar* (London, 1982). The history of a human community is traced over four generations following the arrival of settlers on a world previously inhabited only by the robot Guardian and an orphaned teenage girl, Olwen, who has been physically altered by the robot to suit the harsh environment (hence her reptilian appearance). Survival depends upon learning reverence for nature and the values of tolerance, mutual respect, cooperation, and friendship.

Douglas Hill (b. 1935), a Canadian who lives in London (he is the literary editor of the *Tribune*), is English Canada's other prolific author of SF juveniles. His stories are more routine futuristic adventures. They include the trilogy about ColSec, a huge world-dominating organization (*Exiles of ColSec* [London, 1984], *The Career of Klydor* [London, 1985], and *ColSec Rebellions* [London, 1985]), the trilogy about the huntsman Finn Ferral and his opposition to the alien slaves (*The Huntsman* [London, 1982], *Warriors of the Wasteland* [London, 1983], and *Alien City* [London, 1984]) and the quartet about the adventures of Kell Randor, the Last Legionary of the destroyed planet Moros (*Galactic Warlord* [London, 1979], *Destroying over Veynas* [London, 1980], *Day of the Starwind* [London, 1980], and *Planet of the Warlord* [London, 1981]). Hill has also edited anthologies of SF and fantasy.

Among other English-Canadian SF juveniles, note should be taken

of *The Terrible Chernadryne* (Boston, 1957) and the completion in 1967 of a five-book adventure series begun in 1954 by Eleanor Cameron; the third of Frederick Falkner's "aqualing twins" adventures, *The Aqualing Twins and the Iron Crab* (London, 1959), in which the twins meet an eccentric professor who has constructed a crab-shaped submarine; Edmond Cosgrove's *Terror of the Tar Sands* (Toronto, 1968); John Latimer's lost-world story *The Last Pharaoh* (Toronto, 1970); Delbert A. Young's *The Ghost Ship* (Toronto, 1972), in which a boy is transported backwards in time to Drake's *Golden Hind*; Sheila Burnford's story of a flood caused by pollution, *Mr. Noah and the Second Flood* (Toronto, 1973); Christie Harris's fine *My Man on the Totem Pole?* (Toronto, 1975), a retelling of Northwest Indian legends from a science-fictional point of view; Muriel Leeson's *Oranges and U.F.O.'s* (Richmond Hill, Ontario, 1975), in which a boys' club encounters aliens; Marj Trim's tale of two aliens forced to land in Canada, *Nivek & Nala from Sirix* (Victoria, B.C., 1976); Joan Lynge's *Martin's Starwars* (Ottawa, 1978); and *The Vandarian Incident* (Richmond Hill, Ontario, 1981) by Martyn Godfrey, a former school teacher and past president of the Alberta Writers Guild.

As for Québécois SF for children, the most interesting works are again generally by women. In *Quatre Montréalais en Pan 3000* (Montréal 1963; reissued as *Surreal* in 1971 and translated by Noah Smardge as *The City Underground* in 1964), Suzanne Martel contributes to the future-visions-of-Canada category with her description of life in Montréal's underground city after the destruction of civilization by nuclear war. More recently Martel has published *Tirakul, c'est de l'espèce* (Saint-Lambert, Québec, 1974) and *Nos amis robots* (Montréal, 1981; translated as *Robot Alert* by Patricia Sillescu in 1985). Between 1965 and 1968 Yves Thériault published seven futuristic espionage novels for teenagers featuring a hero named Volpec, and Maurice Gagnon published seven children's novels about an organization named Unipax devoted to world peace. Other titles include Guy Bouchard's hurried but entertaining *Vénus, via Atlantide* (Montréal, 1961); Rolande Lacerre's utopian story of a one-month holiday on Uranus, *Le soleil des profondeurs* (Québec, 1968); six novels by Louis Sural (Sherbrooke 1971-77); Genevieve Gagnon's 22,222 miles à l'heure (Montréal, 1972), which includes a visit to the planet named Haïry; Lucien Gingras's *La Terre bleue* (Montréal, 1972), in which an interplanetary agent must thwart a virus that threatens Earth; Claude Monpetit's *Ido en la planète* (Montréal, 1973); Suzanne Beuchamp's *Une chance sur trois* (Montréal, 1974) set in the year 2101; H. Laflamme's *Les forçats du carmes* (Sherbrooke, 1974); Yvon Brochu's *L'étrange-terrestre* (Montréal, 1975), in which a beautiful extraterrestrial woman turns out to be a Russian spy; Monique (Chénard) Coriueau's *Patric et Sophie en fuite* (Saint-Lambert, Québec, 1975); Marie Plante's *La barrière du temps* (Montréal, 1979), which is about a young girl who encounters extraterrestrials while staying at a friend's house in the forest; Denis Côté's *Hockeysport cybernétique* (Montréal, 1983; translated by Jane Briceley as *Shooting for the Stars*, Windsor, Ontario, 1990), which was inspired by the 1972 Canada/Soviet hockey series and the Soviets' reputation for playing like robots; Charles Monpetit's *Temps perdu* (Montréal, 1983), in which a young girl is transported to the far future by a spiritual entity; and Belgium-born Marie-Andrée Wamant-Côté's *La caravande* (Montréal, 1983), in which seven children have to deal with marauding brigands in a post-nuclear-holocaust world.

Daniel Serminé, who is the literary director of the "Jeunesse-Pop" line of juvenile books for Éditions Paulines in which his own works have appeared, has made a particularly substantial contribution to pre-adult French Canadian SF and "fantasy." Most of his books, in fact, are aimed at adolescent readers, and a generation of French Canadians have grown up reading them. Here I will cite only *Organisation Argus* (Montréal, 1979), the story of a youngster who must protect his uncle's scientific secret from government agents and an alien organization. This belongs to Serminé's Eyméen cycle of juveniles (and adult fiction), in which a benevolent super-race observes our planet and intervenes when necessary to prevent disasters.

Other Canadas and Other Anthologies

The first anthology to include a significant representation of Canadian SF is *Invoking the Future* (Scarborough, Ontario, 1972), edited by R. Duncan Appelford. Under the section headings "Science Fiction and

Myth Reinterpreted," "Idea and Creative Response," "Touchstones," and "Non-Fiction Probes," he distributes the work of eight Canadians, including Phyllis Gordlie and McCall genetics professor John Southin. (In the same year, Richard Lunn's classroom anthology *Space Swiss & Gumbies* [Toronto] reprinted eight SF stories, including only one Canadian example, Gordlie's "Gingerbread Boy" [JF January 1961], and seven detective stories.) For most people, however, the recognition that there was such a thing as Canadian SF (and fantasy) only dawned in 1979 with the publication of the first historical anthology, John Robert Colombo's *Other Canadas: An Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. This important book is made up of some forty items, including fiction (beginning questionably with pieces set in Canada by the Frenchmen Cyrano de Bergerac and Jules Verne), poetry, and nonfiction, as well as a provocative preface, headnotes, and a brief annotated bibliography. Sixteen of the fiction writers and poets represented were born and made their careers in Canada; five others were born in Canada but made their careers elsewhere. To complement *Other Canadas*, Colombo, Michael Richardson, John Bell, and Alexandre L. Amprimo compiled *CND SF & F: A Bibliography of Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1979). This pioneering (albeit incomplete and error-prone) bibliography lists, generally with annotation, some 600 books under such headings as "National Disaster Scenarios," "Fantasy and Weird Tales," and "Children's Literature." Non-Canadians who have written material set in, or in some way related to, Canada are included under the headings "Polar Worlds" and "Canadian Interest." A superior example would be John Wyndham's mutant novel, *The Chrysalids* (1955; US title, *Re-Birth*), which is partly set in Labrador and Newfoundland. Another spinoff of *Other Canadas*, compiled by Colombo, is the horror, fantasy, and SF collection *Friendly Alien: Thirteen Stories of the Fantastic Set in Canada by Foreign Authors* (Toronto, 1981).

A second important historical anthology, *Visions from the Edge: An Anthology of Atlantic Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy*, appeared in 1981, edited by the librarian and fan John Bell and the publisher and writer Lesley Choyce. An informative introduction and headnotes enhance the presentation of twenty authors (only De Mille, Laurence Manning, and Spider Robinson—but not the selections therefrom—overlap with the authors represented in *Other Canadas*), of which nine were actually born and made their careers in Canada. Approximately twelve of these twenty selections count as SF. The introduction includes the statement that "virtually every major Canadian mainstream writer has written at least some science fiction and fantasy." But this material was not ghettoized as was corresponding material in the U.S. pulp magazines from the 1920s onward. However, the assertion "We will find more Canadian science fiction and fantasy in *Maclean's* than in our three short-lived genre pulps" (see chapter 4) is doubtful.

One more anthology appeared in 1981, *New Bodice: A Collection of Science Fiction* (the subtitle according to the cover; *Nine Science Fiction Short Stories* is the subtitle on the title page), edited by Lorne Gould and featuring generally lackluster stories by Toronto-area writers.

Most of the twenty stories in what seems to be the first anthology of Québécois SF, the June 1979 "Science-Fiction" issue of the prestigious Montréal magazine *La nouvelle barre du jour*, edited by Louis-Philippe Hébert and Roger Des Roches, are barely SF and not very good. Jean-Marc Gouanvic, in the first special issue of this Québec SF magazine *imagine* . . . (Autumn 1981), collected stories on that largely untapped subject matter, "Le Nord" (The North). And in 1983 three significant anthologies appeared. Norbert Spehner, the editor of *Solaris*, Québec's other important SF magazine, reprinted ten stories from that magazine by Serigne, Somcnycy, Vonnaburg, and others in his collection *Au nord boréal* (Longueuil), the first of a series. Gouanvic edited *Les années-lumière: Florilège de la science-fiction québécoise* (Montréal), a collection of SF and fantasy stories by April, Bell, Rochon, and others that were originally published during the period 1979-82 in *imagine* . . . Gouanvic also collaborated with France's Stephanie Nicot in editing the first in a series of francophone anthologies, *Épaves imaginaires* I (Montréal), which included five stories from Québec and five from France.

Requiem/Solaris, imagine . . . , and the Québec Scene

I have already noted that the publication of Québécois SF surged dramatically in 1974: six titles in place of the one-a-year average that applied since 1962. It hardly seems coincidental that the first issue of *Requiem* (Québec's "Fanzine de science-fiction et fantastique"), founded in Longueuil by CEGEP Édouard-Montpetit teacher Norbert Spehner, appeared in September of the same year. Rita Painchaud, in her excellent M.A. thesis "La Constitution du champ de la science-fiction au Québec (1974-1984)" (University of Québec at Trois-Rivières, 1989), demonstrates the extent to which the current healthy state of Québécois SF is directly attributable to the role played by the two important local fanzines turned commercially sold "proazines" (professional magazines): *Requiem*, renamed *Solaris* with issue number 28 (August-September 1979) and *imagine* . . . ("Revue de science-fiction québécoise"). *Imagine* . . . was founded by Jean-Marc Gouanvic in 1979. Gouanvic, who was born in Bretagne, France, in 1944, directed Painchaud's thesis and is currently a professor of French at Concordia University. As it happens, the first doctoral dissertation as well as the first M.A. thesis on Canadian SF and/or fantasy were produced in Québec (see chapter 8). To these Québec firsts should be added the others that I have previously remarked—the first published work of Canadian SF and the first magazine devoted exclusively to SF—and the two that I am about to record—the establishment of a publishing line devoted exclusively to SF and the first Canadian award for SF and fantasy.

It is Painchaud's point that the increased production and growing professionalism of Québécois SF and fantasy can be directly related to the Québec publishing, convention, and awards infrastructure that *Requiem/Solaris* and *imagine* . . . are largely responsible for putting in place by the years 1979-80. A group of writers committed to SF and "fantasy" had, in fact, coalesced in Québec around the time that *Requiem* began publishing, some ten years before such a coalescence took place in English Canada. Those writers—the "hard core" of Québécois SF and "fantasy"—eventually included Jean-Pierre April, René Beaulieu, Alain Bergeron, Guy Bouchard, Joël Champetier, Jean Dion, Agnès Guindat, Michel Martin, Charles Montpetit, Francine Pelletier, Esther Rochon, Daniel Serigne, and Élisabeth Vonnaburg in the area of SF; Aude (Claudette Charbonneau-Tissot), André Carpentier, Ann Dandurand, Claire Dé, Gilles Pellerin, and Marie-José Thériault in the area of "fantasy"; and Michel Béll, Bertrand Bergeron, Denis Côté, Jean Pettigrew, Daniel Serigne, and Jean-François Somcnycy in both areas. Presumably, Québec's minority status within Canada and its relative geographical concentration were factors that both necessitated and facilitated the kinds of affirmative action that were taken. Parallel developments within English-Canadian SF, on the other hand, however goaded by its minority status within North America, have been hampered by geographical distances. But the success of *Requiem/Solaris* and *imagine* . . . also has very much to do with the fact that both magazines have been financially supported by the Québec Ministry of Cultural Affairs and by the Canada Council, *imagine* . . . since 1980 and *Requiem/Solaris* since 1982. No English-Canadian fanzines have, as yet, received any government financing. But then no such fanzines of quality have sustained themselves for much more than a two-year period.

Requiem/Solaris, its production values steadily improving, appears bi-monthly whereas the more exclusively SF-oriented *imagine* . . . which has also taken on a professional look, publishes four issues a year (three devoted to fiction and one to history, theory, and criticism). With issue number 53 (Autumn 1983) of *Solaris*, Élisabeth Vonnaburg (who had been literary editor since 1979) took over as editor from Spehner. With issue number 18 (August-September 1983) of *imagine* . . . , Catherine Sauter took over as chief editor from Gouanvic, who continued as literary editor only. With their publication of fiction, reviews, critical articles, bibliographies, interviews, and coverage of the local scene, both magazines are indispensable sources of information.

Between 1979 and 1983, six issues of a Québécois fanzine of some importance, *Pour la belle gueule d'hubris* (PTBGDA), which published comics as well as SF and fantasy prose and poetry, was produced by a group of students at Collège Ste-Foy, the Québec City CEGEP.

In 1975, a couple of teachers at CEGEP Édouard-Montpetit founded the press Le Prémable to publish fiction and poetry. In 1980, as a result of their colleague Spehner's proposal, Le Prémable inaugu-

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Élisabeth Vonarburg:

Little, Big, John Crowley. The only 538-page book ever that took me a week to read. I kept stumbling on its beautiful sentences, re-reading the same ones over and over again, compulsively trying to translate them into French and wanting to die.

If on a winter's night a traveler, Italo Calvino, for the contagious delight of a whimsical writer at play.

Paradigms Lost, John L. Costi. A thought-provoking overview of the main areas of scientific exploration today in a language accessible to everyone, and laced with humor too. A good book to throw at people arguing that science or the scientific method is a narrow and dehumanizing view of the universe.

Le Livre de Margas (The Book of Margins) Edmond Jabes. A too-little-known Jewish-European poet philosopher whose creative impulse has been deepened and not rendered void by his Holocaust experience. A quiet but sharp spirituality, right at the edge of despair but never giving in, saved by the Word.

The Left Hand of Darkness, Ursula K. Le Guin. The book which brought me back to reading at the end of the Sixties (like many women of my generation), making me feel there was really something in there for me as a woman, after all—and as a writer. No matter what PC critics may say today (or the author herself), Le Guin wrote what she *could* write at the time, and as far as I was concerned it went deeper than anything else, even Russ. Each time I read the last sentence, I smile with tears in my eyes at the children saying, "Will you tell us again about the other worlds out among the stars—the other kinds of men, the other lives?"

Last and First Men, Olaf Stapledon. I'll select this one among the many "sense of wonder" books I read when I first began my journey into SF at sixteen (*City*, *Foundation*, *Childhood's End*, *Cities in Flight*, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *The City and*

the Stars, *Out of the Silent Planet*, or *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*, oh, what glorious days.) Why that one? Because of the scope of the imagination, and the grandiose austere Pascalian tone of the ending—even if the last word of the book is "man!"

The Rebel, Albert Camus. Interesting to read this again now that the Soviet Empire has crumbled. I like the strongly ethical point of view Camus keeps hammering on—and the fact that he said all that in the beginning of the Fifties against the Politically Corrects of his time (among them Sartre and Breton).

Remembrance of Things Past, Marcel Proust. A fascination for the past may seem paradoxical in an SF reader and writer, but I was a writer, I think, before being an SF writer—still am. And I wish I could bring the same poignant hallucinatory presence to the imagination of the Future(s) as Proust did to *Things Past*.

It has perhaps something to do with my last entry: *Roman des origines, origines du roman*, Marthe Robert. An intriguing theory put forth by a Freudian critic who was nevertheless a good reader. She illustrates it through studies of Kafka, Balzac, Cervantes, etc. Her hypothesis: each writer has his personal heroic myth about his origin—lost child, adopted child, orphan, etc.—whatever his true familial story is. (There's not one woman among the authors studied in the book; it dates back to the Fifties.) In later life it goes on to define his whole relationship with what is called "reality": either he tries to own it by duplicating it (Balzac, the realists, social or not) or he seems to shy away from it, actually trying to master it through a fantastic reconstruction, a non-realist approach, fantasy, Magic realism, etc. (Kafka, for instance.) Of course we have a subtler grasp of what reality is today, but I've always wondered how the hypothesis may apply to (a) female writers and (b) to female science fiction writers. How do women construct their heroic myths? Answers, anyone? ▶

rated an SF line, the first such, "Chroniques du futur," with Vonarburg's *L'œil de la nuit* and April's *La machine à explorer la fiction*. Since then one or two "Chroniques du futur" titles have appeared almost every year. The next step, the publication in 1983 of one francophone and two Québec anthologies, I have noted above.

Élisabeth Vonarburg began organizing SF and fantastic writing workshops in 1979. Almost all the field's important Québecois authors attended, including Jöel Champetier, Jean Dion, Charles Montpetit, Francine Pelletier, Guy Sirois, and Daniel Serigne.

The first annual Canadian award for SF and fantasy was a Québec award for Québecois work. Since 1977, *Régisisme/Solaris* has awarded the Prix Dagon (renamed the Prix Solaris in 1981) to the following authors of the following stories published in *Régisisme* and *Solaris*: Daniel Serigne for the first story of a series "Exode 5" (1977), Élisabeth Vonarburg for "L'œil de la nuit" (1978), Camille Bouchard for "Les ancêtres" (1979), René Beaulieu for "Le géral bleu" (1980), Jean-François Somcynsky for "2500" (1981), and, in 1982, 1982d Daniel Serigne for "Loin des vertes prairies," and the French authors, Dana and Eric Odin, for "Walpurgis." No award was given in 1983.

Beginning in 1980 Borel prizes were awarded in a growing number of categories at the annual Québec convention, Borel. (The first and third of these were organized by Élisabeth Vonarburg in Chicoutimi in July 1979 and in July 1982. She also organized the tenth in June 1988.) I do not have space to list all the winners, but in 1980 Alain Bergeron's *Un été de Jascun* won in the category of best novel or story collection since 1970; in 1981 Jean-Pierre April's *La machine à*

explorer la fiction won in the same category. In 1982 Élisabeth Vonarburg won for *Le silence de la cité* (best SF novel), René Beaulieu for *Légendes de Virnie* (best SF collection), and Michel Bédit for *Greenwich* (best fantastic novel) and *Déménagement* (best fantastic collection); and in 1983 André Carpentier won for *Du pain des oiseaux* (best fantastic novel) and Pierre Billon for *L'enfant du cinquième nord* (best SF novel).

Anglophone Fandom

Canadian fandom has increased in activity and importance alongside Canadian SF. In *Years of Light* (1982), Colombo lists some forty anglophone fanzines that came out of Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto (source of the majority), Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver during the period 1980-82 (along with the two Québec prozines described above). Colombo states that his list should not be considered complete, "so quixotic and quirky is the field." The most important fanzine listed is *New Canadian Fandom*, an attempt to cover the national scene (like the long-deceased *Canadian Fandom*), beginning with the issue for April-May 1981, edited in Edmonton by Robert A. Runtz. Its publication record has been erratic; the last issue to date (no. 8) was for October 1985. Forrest Fusco, Jr.'s *Starburst: The Canadian SF Magazine* (named for Perry Rhodan's first spaceship), edited in Toronto, attempted to be the first Canadian semiprozine, a paying quarterly (albeit a very modest one at one cent a word); it managed nine issues between August 1975 and Spring 1981.

A number of significant English-Canadian fanzines appeared in the seventies but did not survive long enough to be included in Colombo's list. Included mistakenly is *Boreal: A Canadian Magazine of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. While living in Halifax, John Bell produced two issues of this fanzine (Summer 1978, Spring 1979). The late Bruce Robbins's *Paradox* was irregularly produced in Montréal in the early seventies and died when Robbins and his employer, Sun Life, moved to Toronto. Missing from Colombo's list is the important bibliographical fanzine *Science Fiction Collector* (which continues as the *Science Fiction Collector, New Combined as Megaword*). It was begun in Calgary in October 1976 and published irregularly from 1979 until its demise in 1981; following the move of its editor, James Grant Thiesen, it was printed in the United States but published by Thiesen's Pandora's Books Ltd., Manitoba. It should also be noted that while the American, Leland Sapiro, resided in Saskatoon and Regina, his important quasi-academic *Riverdale Quarterly* reflected something of its Canadian milieu (see the November 1964-August 1973 issue).

Susan Wood's contribution to English-Canadian fandom in the seventies, cut short by her premature death at age thirty-two in 1980, was particularly notable. A prolific fan writer, with her husband Mike Glicksman (a Toronto high-school teacher), Wood edited, between 1970 and 1973, fifteen issues of the most successful English-Canadian fanzine ever: the quarterly gazette (general fanzine) *Energumen* (the name means "fantastic, devil possessed"). Characterized by high-quality artwork and superior writing, *Energumen* won the 1973 Hugo for "Best Fan Magazine." Susan Wood herself won the 1973 Hugo for "Best Fan Writer," tied for the Hugo in 1976, and was awarded it posthumously in 1981. She was Fan Guest of Honor at the 1975 World SF Convention in Australia. In September 1981 Glicksman produced a sixteenth issue of *Energumen*, consisting mainly of reprinted material, inscribed "In Memoriam Susan Wood."

Poised to chronicle the triumphs of the 1984-plus period, the first issue of the *Maple Leaf Rag*, "a six-weekly newsletter for Canadian fan" (plural of fan), edited by Garth Spencer of Victoria, B.C., appeared in November 1983. Twenty-nine issues appeared, the last in May 1987. An admittedly incomplete listing in issues 1, 2, and 3 of 1983 fanzines (including Québécois ones) adds up to a total of forty-two. Some of the titles are different, but the overall total is much the same as that Colombo arrived at for the previous year.

The idea of an annual Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award emerged as part of Bob Atkinson and John Bell's planning for HalCon III, the fan convention held in Halifax in March 1980. According to the rules outlined in the Program Book, the award is open to Canadian natives (regardless of current address or citizenship) or Canadian residents (regardless of their birthplace or citizenship). It was decided the award would move successively among the five major regional SF Cons (Conventions) in Canada—the others being Y-Con (British Columbia), NonCon (Alberta), MapleCon (Ottawa), and Boreal (Québec). Each in turn would be designated that year's CanCon (Canadian National Convention) in addition to its regular name. The first award, a cast-iron sculpture of the "coeur"—the alien catlike creature in van Vogt's first SF publication, "The Black Destroyer"—was given to HalCon III's guest of honor, van Vogt, for lifetime contributions to the field. Subsequently, the award, which took different forms, was given to Susan Wood for lifetime contributions, to Phyllis Gottlieb for *Judgment of Dragons* and lifetime contributions, and to Judith Merril for lifetime contributions. The story of this single award's development into the nine-category Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association Awards (CSFAs, or "Caspers"), and the ten-category Auroras will be taken up in chapter 8.

The connection between fan and academic SF activity in Canada is provided by Jean-Marc Gouzinic, Élisabeth Vonarburg, and especially Susan Wood. Wood taught Canadian literature at the University of British Columbia (her doctoral dissertation is entitled "Myths of the Land in Canadian Prose"), wrote *The Poison Maiden and the Great Bitch: Female Stereotypes in Marvel Superhero Comics* (Baltimore, 1974), and edited an important collection of essays by Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Language of the Night* (New York, 1979).

As for the purely academic contributions, Douglas Barbour, now an English professor at the University of Alberta, wrote the first

Canadian doctoral dissertation on SF, "Patterns of Meaning in the SF Novels of Ursula K. Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and Samuel R. Delany, 1962-1972" (Queen's University, 1976), sections of which were subsequently published in revised form, including *An Opening in the Field: The SF Novels of Joanna Russ* (Baltimore, 1978) and *Worlds out of Words: The SF Novels of Samuel R. Delany* (Prometheus, Somerset, U.K., 1979). Other scholarly Canadian contributions to the study of SF include three books by Montréal academics: Robert M. Philmus's *Into the Unknown: The Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H. G. Wells* (Berkeley, 1970); the present author's *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (New York, Bloomington, 1974), the first book to provide detailed readings of contemporary works of SF; and Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, 1979), the most influential theoretical study yet published. Between 1978 and 1990 *Science-Fiction Studies* was published in Montréal, the local editors then being one of the founders, Darko Suvin (until 1981), Marc Angenot (1979-84), and Robert M. Philmus (1979-present). The journal is now published in the United States by an editorial collective that includes as its Canadian component Philmus and Veronica Höllinger of Trent University.

For almost ten years Michael Lord of Laval University has provided bridges between the literary establishment, academe, and Québécois SF as a columnist for journals such as *Lettres québécoises* and as an anthologist. In 1986 he and several others would organize themselves into a research group at Laval University, the Groupe de recherche interdisciplinaire sur les littératures fantastiques dans l'imaginaire québécois (GRILFIQ). They have compiled an annotated bibliographical record of French-Canadian SF and "fantasy." Thanks to Élisabeth Vonarburg and others, Francophone academic meetings on SF and fantasy took place in Québec with some regularity from 1979 on. They succeeded in bringing writers, critics, and academics together.

We should not overlook the significant critical, bibliographical, and editorial contributions of John Clute, who was born in Toronto in 1940 but has lived in London, England, since 1969. As associate editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (London, 1979), the general editor of which is the Australian Peter Nicholls, Clute played a major role (writing many entries) in bringing into existence what is today the best general SF reference book. The second edition, which he is co-editing with Nicholls, has been long awaited. Clute has contributed his insightful baroque brand of criticism to a variety of publications, including Michael Moorcock's *New Worlds* (which also published his first SF story, "A Man Must Die," in 1966) and the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. The best of Clute's criticism has recently been collected in *Sprock: Essays and Reviews 1966-1986* (Seattle, 1988). He was reviews editor for the British journal of SF criticism, *Foundation* (another outlet for his own reviews) from 1980 to 1990, and was one of the editorial collective of eight that founded *Interzone* in 1982, the avant-garde and generally downbeat successor to *New Worlds* as the most influential British SF magazine. (The second issue [Summer 1982] contained Canadian Andrew Weiner's satire on alien invasions, "The Third Test.") Now one of the magazine's advisory editors, Clute has also co-edited the various *Interzone* anthologies that have appeared since 1985.

The Secondary Universe 4 Conference (now the annual Science Fiction Research Association Conference), which met in Toronto in 1971 (8-11 October), was largely organized by Toronto's Spaced Out Library (an important resource for both academics and fans) in conjunction with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Judith Merril, Darko Suvin, Peter Fitting, Peter Gill, John Percy, and John Millard were on the organizing committee, and among the participants were many scholars (including the present writer) and well-known authors (including the American Ursula K. Le Guin). No sessions that I recall were offered on Canadian SF or fantasy, but the event provided a boost for these genres that would be reinforced two years later by TorCon 2, the Thirty-First World Science Fiction Convention, which was held at the Royal York Hotel, 1-3 September 1973. The attendance at over 2,000 was at least ten times greater than at TorCon 1 in 1948. ▀

David Ketterer's previous books include New Worlds for Old and Impersonated in a Tesseract, a study of James Blish.

Screed

(letters of comment)

Barry N. Malzberg, Teaneck, New Jersey

Panshin's essay on Heinlein and the Great Quest (NYRSF #38) is interesting but thin (what he sees as abandonment cynics might call maturation) and I'd like to call his attention to (among other works) the 1956 novel *Double Star*, the 1942 novelette "Year of the Jackpot" and the 1959 "All You Zombies"—as exemplification of Heinlein's continuing interest, at least before the last spate of long, bad novels, in confronting serious issues dead-on and without benefit of sentimentality. Particularly, Panshin should take a careful look at the epilogue to *Double Star*.

The problem with embracing a quest for "the meaning of life" is that it is redolent of college dormitories and heavy sessions with the White Rabbit; it's the kind of thing which most of us, rightly or wrongly, stop doing at a certain point. High abstraction is a peculiar and deadly exercise for the young, the wicked or the collectors of remittance; the rest of us regard it as an hermetic exercise, as Norman Mailer might say. I say that Panshin has to the best of my knowledge never given ground, admitted fault on anything in or out of print in the two and a half decades I've known him and his work and this isn't likely to change the equation.

Robert Devereaux, Rocklin, California

One minor *mea culpa* with regard to my review of Richard Laymon's *The Stake* (NYRSF #40): A few weeks ago, on the New Books shelf of my local library, I found a history of the Production Code, *The Dame in the Kimono* by Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990). In their discussion of Richard Burton and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, they include the following passage (p. 245) which gives, let us say, the pseudo-life to one of my derogations:

In summer 1964, Warner Bros. and the Electronvision company brought seven cameras into a Broadway theater to shoot two performances of Richard Burton's *Hamlet*. Cut primarily during principal photography, the kinescope-like finished print was ready a few days later. In early fall, the picture would play a two-day-only booking in 971 United States and Canadian theaters.

In sending Richard Laymon an advance copy of my review, I mentioned this citation, ducking and bowing my review's mortification all the while, and asked if he would care to comment on where a present-day high-school girl might have seen this obscure film (something I'd love to do myself if truth be told). Laymon's response: "Lane, of course, saw a pirated copy from the private film collection of a noted fantasy writer—who shall go unnamed."

Charles Platt, New York, New York

Fredrik Pohl's note on SFWA is admirable in its restraint. Even so, look at the picture it paints: of an organization that doesn't have a charter, seldom works to benefit its members in tangible terms, frequently mis-counts ballots, and suffers from endless unprofessional squabbling. Does it have to be this way?

I believe it does. In this field, unlike any other, writers routinely create, populate, and destroy entire planetary systems. In this field, misfits who usually suffered some form of rejection are free to fight back. Our fiction celebrates hubris. We should not be surprised when this translates into temper tantrums and wild exhibitions of ego in real life.

Bearing this in mind, it was inevitable that SFWA devolved to its current condition. The typical personality profile of science-fiction and fantasy writers guaranteed it. Moreover, regardless of any efforts at reform, I am convinced that SFWA (or any other organization like it) will naturally devolve to the same state. There is, in fact, no "solution" to SFWA's problems. Indeed, from the perspective of people who enjoy a good hysterical squabble, these aren't problems at all.

Personally, this doesn't bother me. (I have never joined SFWA, because I could never see the tangible benefits. I did do some volunteer work organizing parties in New York; but that was because

I wanted to continue attending the parties myself as a non-member, with a clear conscience.)

The one aspect of SFWA that does bother me is the ongoing force of the Nebula Awards. These mostly go to fantasy writers whose personal popularity is at least as important as the content of their work. Unfortunately, in the real world, readers are liable to interpret "Nebula Award" a lot more seriously than they should. Thus, a trophy given by an incestuous group of squabbling semi-professionals to one of their own translates into bigger money (sometimes dramatically bigger) for the recipient's future work. This is clearly wrong.

If members of SFWA went to run an annual popularity contest, I have no problems with that. At the Nebula feasts, if SFWAs go into a red-faced frothing rage when confronted with a bar that closes too early, or if they become demented and attack a stereo system with a penknife (to cite a couple of fairly recent examples), that's fine too—it's good theater. But please, let us recognize that the awards and the bad behavior are all part of the same package. None of it merits our respect, and none of it should translate into terms that enhance a writer's career.

Dennis Lien, Minneapolis, Minnesota

In his review of Richard Laymon's *The Stake* (NYRSF #40), Robert Devereaux complains of an apparent impossibility: a Laymon character recalls seeing Richard Burton's *Hamlet* on film, though this production "was never caught on film." Ah, but it was, though that production (filmed in "Electrovision" was available for theatrical viewing only for a few days in the fall of 1964. (I saw it then in Fargo, North Dakota.) See, among other works, the section on this production in Kenneth S. Rothwell and Annabelle Henkin Malzer's *Shakespeare on Screen* (Neal-Schuman, 1990).

However, if anyone is collecting impossible references from recent major horror novels, let me share a few from Dan Simmons' *Summer of Night*, set in the summer of 1960. The town constable, Howard Silas, is universally nicknamed "Barney" after "the deputy on *The Andy Griffith Show*" (p. 112)—which had its first broadcast in October of 1960. (At some other point, a television show is noted as being on "Channel Eighteen"—unlikely in my memory of pre-cable 1960.)

The unholy "Borgia Bell" that is the focus of the horror was brought to New York in 1876 by "a British ship, the H.M.S. *Erebus*" (p. 149). There were several accidents on the voyage, which is not unexpected, since the famous *Erebus* had been destroyed 28 years earlier on Sir John Franklin's doomed expedition in search of the Northwest Passage.

My favorite, however, is the eldritch coffee Thermos which Duane empties on page 130 and which has refilled itself with no human intervention by page 146, a very practical sort of Horn of Plenty that I could have used in my own farm-kid days.

Whose Utopia II

continued from page 24

fully interpret modern sf without knowing what Tuckerizing means.)

But perhaps more interesting for me is the questions it raises about utopian literature, especially the question of whose utopia is it? I would not in the least want to live in any of the feminist utopias I have read, any more than in one of the Christian ones, pastoral ones, technocratic, etc. Regardless of that fact I still like to read utopias, often find them inspiring, provocative, illuminating. Especially if they are well-written. Unfortunately, most of them are not, sacrificing aesthetics to whatever program they push. The feminist utopias published by science fiction writers in the 1970s were in fact exceptionally well-written for that particular sub-genre, and influential far beyond the sf field.

Tucker's novel, it seems to me, got ploughed over by the spirit of the times. Politically, it was viewed as antipathetic to the dominant political attitudes, and aesthetically it was inferior to the finest of the feminist works (though not by any means all). So it was not dealt with aesthetically at all. The question of whose utopia wasn't raised then. It should have been.

—David G. Hartwell & the editors

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Whose Utopia Is It, Anyway? II:

Resurrection Days

One interesting strain in utopian fiction in recent decades has been the story of the one person who doesn't fit. Classics of this form include Joanna Russ's "Nobody's Home" and Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." Less well-known is Wilson Tucker's *Resurrection Days* (1981).

Tucker is one of the major figures in science fiction in the twentieth century. His contributions to the literature include at least two classics: *The Year of the Quiet Sun* and *The Long, Low Silence*. Surely enough, one would think, to assure a new work widespread sympathetic attention. But this was not the case with *Resurrection Days*. I have mulled over what seems to me a backlash, perhaps in equal parts against the work and against Tucker's prodigious reputation in the field as an indefatigable party-goer, joker, male chauvinist, the biggest social lion in the Midwest. It was a case of unfortunate cultural timing.

For *Resurrection Days* is a light-hearted emulation of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, in which an uneducated housepainter from the post-war 1940s Midwest is cast forward in time to the distant future, in which a feminist society rules. Our hero, who embodies the cultural values of a normal young man of his day, sees this at first as a great opportunity for fun, then as a world run by Aunt Pollies who want to fence him in, tame him, civilize him. So he lights out for the territories beyond. This is not only a novel in the tradition of Twain, but of Huxley and Orwell (yet lacking any seeming didactic political intent), and Heinlein's *Beyond This Horizon*. It was generally received as a shameful attack on feminism.

It does not read that way to me. Rather it reads like a traditional American novel in which the male central character is profoundly uncomfortable with the feminizing aspects of any society, a frontier mentality still dominant in the 1940s. A different man might have adjusted comfortably to this future society, but not Tucker's. He had to leave—leaving the question of utopia for others, rejecting by implication all political solutions.

Tucker plays fair both with the set of givens upon which he launches his fiction and with the parallels to Twain. His character is plausible and well-drawn as a forties teenager, to whom this feminist society would seem some kind of joke. The feminist society is sketchily drawn, but with some affection for individuals. The story is told with a sure hand, craft, and more than a little wit. And it was published at a time when a decade of consciousness-raising had swept over the science fiction field and created some unlikely bedfellows. This novel was not politically correct in the early 1980s. It was made to vanish quickly.

Let me be clear that I am not declaring it a lost classic, but it is certainly a respectable part of a major writer's career, not by far his weakest book. It seems to me that critics might well compare it to the works of other sf writers who used mainstream literary parallels to underpin their sf novels (Silverberg's use of Conrad in *Downward to the Earth*, Benford's use of Faulkner in *Against Infinity*), as well as to the stories mentioned above. Almost no serious work has yet been done even on Tucker's major works, or his contributions to the tropes, conventions and techniques of modern sf. (One cannot

(continued on page 23)